

# ROLLERDERBY

**No. 24**

Arab Strap

Sean Lennon

Eric Hexum

Jan Terri

Cat Power

T.S. Eliot

Capitalism

Cats



**Sex & Violence at Summer Camp  
How Would You Want To Die?**



# OUCH!

## *My Sex and Violence Timeline*

by Amy Kellner

1974-81: Innocent childhood, except for the occasional cunnilingus or poop-handling (see *Rollerderby* 22).

1982: Got my tooth knocked out on the bus and no one had a tissue so I had to hold a mouthful of blood in my mouth till we got to the camp. My fellow riders kept trying to make me talk so I'd dribble the blood out.

1983: Got chicken pox, lice, my friend Joanne threw up on my foot on the bus and again, no tissues, so I had a sandal covered in vomit that looked like egg salad until they could hose me off. I can't wear sandals to this day.

1984: Girl sticks hot dog up her, it gets stuck, counselor has to pull it out. Her popularity skyrocketed.

1985: Pubic hair contest--I won--I had five and two were really long.

1986: Raiding the boys' bunks--sticking bloody pads on the pillows of the boys we like.

1987: This girl Jackie allegedly plucks out several pubic hairs and puts them in a locket for her boyfriend. She becomes our class's first officially-dubbed Slut.

1988: First suicide attempt--took ten Advil and lay on my bed in a dramatic pose

while listening to Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody."

1989: My dad dragged me down the hallway by my hair after I went to see The Who reunion tour without permission.

1990: In a game of Truth or Dare at a sleepover, I stuck a carrot up my cunt and

the spitting image of Crispin Glover, but he would stick pens in his ear and then sniff them. He frightened me with pictures from *Apocalypse Culture* so I ran away, but regretted it years later when his ex-girlfriend told me he was an incredible lay.

1993: Nothing happened.

1994: Fucked up the ass "by accident" during doggie-style when the dumb guy can't find the "right hole." Upon hearing me scream "Yeeow! wrong hole, dumbass!" he says, "Oh sorry. I just thought you were tight."

1995: Fucked a gravedigger up the ass with a dildo in a motel room in Alabama.

1996: Tried to kick an ex-girlfriend down the subway stairs. Two other friends pulled me off. I had also flicked a lit cigarette at her. Then I went home and threw up.

1997: Hit on a girl in a lesbian bar and she started crying.

1998: Went on a date with a girl who told me of her plans to get two rows of labia piercings so she could lace her vagina closed and then see what her partner would do with it. "What would you do with it?" she asked me. I answered, "Uh, unlace it and then fuck?" Apparently, my answer was incorrect.



**Amy Kellner (center) & friends with balloons for breasts.**

then everyone ate it (the carrot). A big show was made of saying, "Mm-mm yum!"

1991: Snuck a boy into my bedroom to have sex. After he leaves my mom comes storming into my room screaming "Don't you think I know the smell of FUCK?!" The condom I threw out my window got caught in a tree.

1992: Went on a date with a boy who was

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# Arab Strap

## Scottish Slang

Canny mind = can't remember  
tunes (shite or braw) = songs (worthless or lovely)  
swanky shag palace = apartment  
clays = clothes  
trolleys, kaks, breeks = pants  
cunt = fashionable  
manging, ganting, you are a boot, you got a face like a burst couch, face like a bulldog chewing a wasp/bulldog licking piss off a nettle, you got a face like a bag of spanners = ugly (a spanner is a wrench)  
a poof, bent shot, chutney ferret, turd burglar, ass bandit, shit stabber, lunchbox lancer, shirt lifter = homosexual  
tuppenny licker, lemon = lesbian  
bugging, getting on your tets = irritating  
boosoms, chebs = breasts  
fanny, dibbit = vagina

LISA: So what do you talk about to your girlfriends when you call home?

DAVID: Chebs.

AIDAN: "How's your chebs?" I don't know. I was talking about how hot and tired and dreadful I felt.

LISA: Boy, that must have been a great phone call. You've only been in America three days!

AIDAN: We go to bed, play, go back to bed, then get up in the morning and travel. We don't see much of anything.

LISA: What's your sign?

DAVID: Aquarius.

LISA: Oh, you're a dreamer, you're friends with everybody, yet you can't quite have that one, close bind that you always desire.

DAVID: Shit.

AIDAN: He is a very friendly young man. Everybody says that about him, especially my bloody mother. When you got your tooth knocked out, my mum said, "Oh he's such a nice, sweet boy, why would anyone want to hurt David?"

DAVID: She's right.

AIDAN: I was hearing various tales of your...um...performances.

LISA: What things?

AIDAN: Various...things...involving...pissing in cups.

LISA: Oh, that. That was in a litter box, not a cup. Because I was a cat. It wasn't gratuitous; I was in character. That was a long time ago.

AIDAN: [looking at a Suckdog CD] These photos...

LISA: I picked them because of the faces. We're having sex, but we're in really bad

moods. Here I am having sex with a girl and I'm in a bad mood, here I am having sex with a man and I'm in a bad mood. I thought it was funny. Jean Louis is thinking, "Do we have to be here?" I'm thinking, "When is this over?" We weren't actually having sex, though. He had a little toy soldier on his penis and there was this little toy bear he was supposed to be chasing into my cave. We just did it after a show for fun, but obviously from the expressions on our faces something went terribly, terribly wrong.

AIDAN: It's difficult to speak to you after seeing that picture.

LISA: It's difficult for me to speak to you period. This Scottish guy interviewed me one time, I didn't understand one word he said. It was like, "Ich och wee beet!" Like a barking animal! [laughter] I don't mean to be insulting. When I got the magazine in the mail, I saw I'd answered everything wrong. Because I just guessed. I just thought, "Well, he probably said something about something, so I'll tell him this." But how come you guys understand everything I say? I guess I'm just retarded.

AIDAN: Because it's been pummeled into our head from years and years of atrociously bad American TV.

DAVID: Half of our television is American.

LISA: On *Frasier* I think we have one slightly Scottish old man.

SARAH STROGER: What about Garbage, Shirley Manson--is she your national treasure?

AIDAN: [groans] She's very, very popular among the tabloid papers. They just asked us to support them on their tour. We said no. Fucking hate her. Apparently we're her favorite band.

SARAH: [impressed] Really!

AIDAN: But I don't care about anything like that. Apparently we're quite popular with Helena Christensen as well.

LISA: What percentage of your life do you not remember?

MALCOLM: That's a bit fucking deep. Probably most of it. Eighty percent.

LISA: Do you feel that life forgotten was life lived?

MALCOLM: No.

LISA: So you have 20 percent of a life. Eighty percent of your life is useless.

MALCOLM: I used to keep diaries, from 16 to 21. Then when I was 22 I ripped

them all up and put them in a bucket because I [?].

LISA: You "gave a past enema"?

MALCOLM: [?]

LISA: You're "an arse with the past"?

MALCOLM: [irritated pause] I'm just saying I ripped them all up because it didn't mean anything.

LISA: There is no past, you're saying? There's only the eternal present?

MALCOLM: Right.

LISA: How old are you?

MALCOLM: Old enough.

LISA: How old are you!

MALCOLM: 24.

LISA: Does Aidan get all the attention and you get mad?

MALCOLM: I don't get mad, no. I get even.

LISA: Do you feel like if you wrestled with him it would relieve some tension?

MALCOLM: I think we should hit each other occasionally.

LISA: Do you ever?

MALCOLM: Not recently, no.

LISA: Aidan, do you feel that if he hit you it would even things out a little bit?

AIDAN: No, I'd just leave.

LISA: Are you a pacifist?

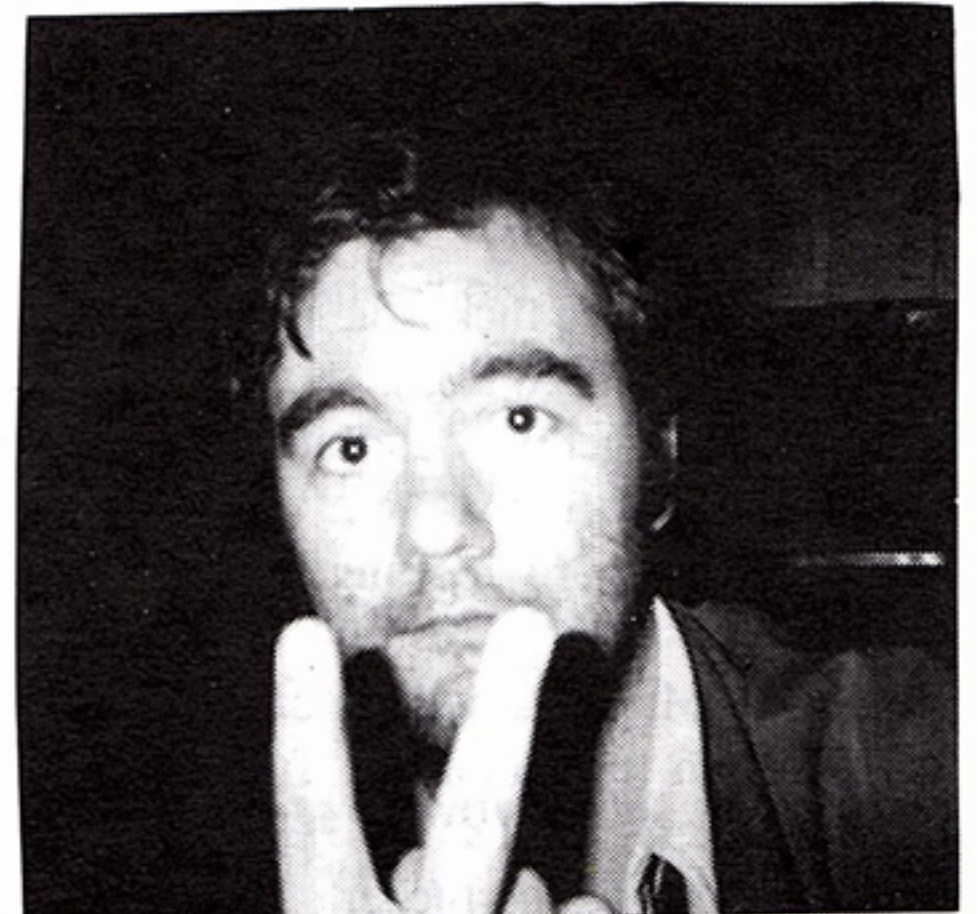
AIDAN: Yes.

LISA: How come you grow a beard?

AIDAN: [Touring?] for days on end is very hard.

LISA: Because your lyrics are so explicit, I wonder if girls think, "I better not do anything with him because then he'll write about it." Or if they think, "I should do something with him, because then he'll write about it."

AIDAN: Maybe. I don't know. I don't care, to be honest with you. It's not so interesting. That's my lady [the woman on



Aidan demonstrates the Scottish F.U.



the back of their CD *Philophobia*]. Have you seen the back of Lisa's CD, Malcolm? I notice you've got it turned down. It's hard to speak to her once you've seen it!

LISA: Well look at yours!

AIDAN: At least I'm smiling!

LISA: Yours is a very disturbing photo, frankly. Your head is so puny--

GRANDMA: Yet the dong is so long.

LISA: No, it's really not. But your *thighs*, your thighs are of magnificent dimensions.

AIDAN: Well they are, look!

LISA: No, not in real life. I mean, I thought I was going to meet someone tonight with a puny head and a mountainous body--especially the thighs.

AIDAN: It was an art school perspective.

MALCOLM: The girl who drew that can't draw. She's crap.

LISA: It's good. You present yourself like this, and then when people meet you they're pleasantly surprised. They think, "Well, he's not so bad after all."

AIDAN: Yes, they're like, "Woaaaaah, well he's slimmed down!"

LISA: I'm gonna read to you these *Readers Digest* quotes and you tell me if you agree or disagree, OK? Malcolm has a *fishing cap* on, I'm sorry but I can't get over it! I mean, can you, Grandma?

GRANDMA: I don't know, Grandma!

[*Malcolm says he wears it so his head doesn't get sunburnt, and he has to repeat it three times before I understand. I keep on mishearing him say foul things instead. He's getting so mad!*]

LISA: You know, I do love the other nations. I do. I just don't understand them when they talk.

MALCOLM: What? You're very Grecian and you like to walk?

LISA: Ha ha, you're teasing me.

MALCOLM: I'm pleasing you, you say?

LISA: "Morality is truth in full bloom." True?

MALCOLM: No.

AIDAN: No. That's shite.

LISA: Why is that shite? That's Victor Hugo!

AIDAN: Who the fuck is he?

MALCOLM: Hugo Boss.

LISA: I don't get it. A clothing reference? That's not very funny.

SARAH: They're making fun of you, Lisa.

MALCOLM: *She's making of me.*

LISA: I'm not making fun of you, motherfucker!

MALCOLM: Motherfucker.

LISA: Oh, excuse me, did I say that? I'm

sorry.

SARAH: Do you think "mofo" is the politically correct way of saying "motherfucker"?

MALCOLM: Look, who's asking the *fucking* questions?

SARAH: Uh, I think I just did.

LISA: Oooh.

GRANDMA: Things are getting a little tense at this table.

MALCOLM: Fucking [*some swears I don't understand*].

TR JOHNSON: The Scottish are good fighters, aren't they?

MALCOLM: [*sarcastic and hostile*] Right, the Scottish are good fighters.

LISA: Do you have a Scottishman's complex?

MALCOLM: [?]

LISA: Did you say swimmer's complex?

MALCOLM: I think you understand that [*pointing to the naked picture of Lisa and Costes on the back of the CD*].

LISA: Yeah, that's why we had sex so much. He's French. Ten years we were married and I didn't understand one word he said.

AIDAN: "Oui."

LISA: You guys alcoholics?

MALCOLM: Yes.

AIDAN: No.

LISA: What makes you not an alcoholic?

AIDAN: I'm not dependent on it.

MALCOLM: You're in denial. That makes you a worse alcoholic than me.

LISA: You two aren't best friends, are you?

MALCOLM: Yes we are.

AIDAN: No we're not. We're not.

MALCOLM: Yes we are.

LISA: Maybe you like him a little more than he likes you. Is that what the problem is? Are you a lunchbox lancer?

MALCOLM: I don't understand you.

LISA: I'm trying to speak your lingo. Are you a lunchbox lancer? A turd-turner.

AIDAN: Turd burglar.

MALCOLM: Is that what you called me, Aidan? A turd burglar? No, I'm a beaver

cleaver.

LISA: Do you have a regular ladyfriend?

MALCOLM: Not at present, no.

LISA: See, that's where the tension arises. Aidan spends all his time with his woman now.

AIDAN: It's not the woman's fault. It's just very hot.

LISA: Like being in the van all the time?

AIDAN: We all fall out with each other, we can't help it.

MALCOLM: If you want a serious answer, it's basically before I joined the band we were friends by choice, but now we have to be in each other's company seven days a week, 24 hours a day. So of course I fucking hate him.

Arab Strap  
by David C. Goolkasian

So I'm listening to this excellent new song on the radio and Lisa "Suckdog" Carver calls just as it is finishing and I try to sing it to her. "All the umbrellas in London couldn't drag you away and all the dope in New York... mumble..." I trail off indecipherably, "--sounds kind of like the Smiths or Nick Cave or I give up, who sings it?" "Oh," says Lisa confidently, "it must be Arab Strap. I'll send you the CD."

So she sends me the CD and No No No. This is all wrong. The song I love is *beautiful* and sad and depictive. Arab Strap are just sad and descriptive.

Arab Strap, to me, sound like a stark black and white camera being intentionally focused on life's grossest moments: A dirty sock on a cold concrete floor. A wet spot on a disheveled mattress. A pubic hair on a toilet bowl seat. All of which are scenes I avoid in life because I find them boring or disgusting. Why do so many people today want to hear music that sounds exactly like life's low points? Because they're stupid.

LISA: "Music is the soundtrack of your life." True or false?

AIDAN: That's wank, but it's true wank.

LISA: You know who said that? Dick Clark!

MALCOLM: So if you walk in a bar and you hear a happy tune, then you feel happy, so [?].

LISA: [*horribly rudely interrupting*] I don't know *what* you're saying.

MALCOLM: I'll just shut up then, OK.

LISA: You're totally pissed. You hate me.

MALCOLM: Well.

LISA: Is that too strong? You just

dislike me.

MALCOLM: I think we got off on the wrong foot here.

LISA: Yeah? What are you going to do about it?

MALCOLM: Eh, smash your dictaphone.

LISA: Oh, go ahead. No one ever smashed my dictaphone before. [*Screams as a fight ensues.*]

MALCOLM: You scratched me!

TR: Do you all wear kilts in Scotland?

MALCOLM: Yeah, 'cause we can shoot the heroin in our dick faster that way, because we all do heroin every day.

AIDAN: Yes, because the sheep can hear



the zipper from 500 yards.

MALCOLM: It's easier to make a human chain with kilts on.

LISA: A human chain?

SARAH: Fucking each other up the ass while trainspotting.

AIDAN: Whilst listening to Iggy Pop. "Lust For Life" played on the bagpipe.

LISA: I'm understanding everything you say now. So do you still hate me?

MALCOLM: [*gives the so-so hand sign*] The needle's moving 'round. Earlier, when you didn't understand anything I said, you'd say what you thought I'd said, and you always came up with something offensive that rhymed with what I said.

SARAH: But her confusion is endearing.

LISA: Not to him. He is seriously not endeared.

SARAH: I think he's just pretending. Is she endearing to you?

MALCOLM: In a kind of annoying way, yeah.

LISA: Agree or disagree: "The truth, which is indestructible, has a way of accumulating against pride and arrogance and then sweeping them from its path."

AIDAN: Who cares?

LISA: Yeah, it's all big words, not enough action. Who fucking cares? Oops, I mean who makes love to care. I don't say fuck anymore, Malcolm. Nobody says "make love" unless they listen to Yanni. I'm reclaiming it. I mean, do you say "make love," Grandma?

GRANDMA: Oh Grandma, I mean, squirrels make love. Gnus, possibly.

LISA: Yes, but you're special. Your world is special.

SARAH: What do you mean, you're reclaiming it?

LISA: Like when blacks started saying "nigger" to rob racists of the power of the word. I'm trying to steal back the power of making love from the Yanni crowds.

SARAH: I don't like it, really.

LISA: I don't care if you don't like it.

SARAH: I didn't ask you to care!

LISA: I *am* making love!

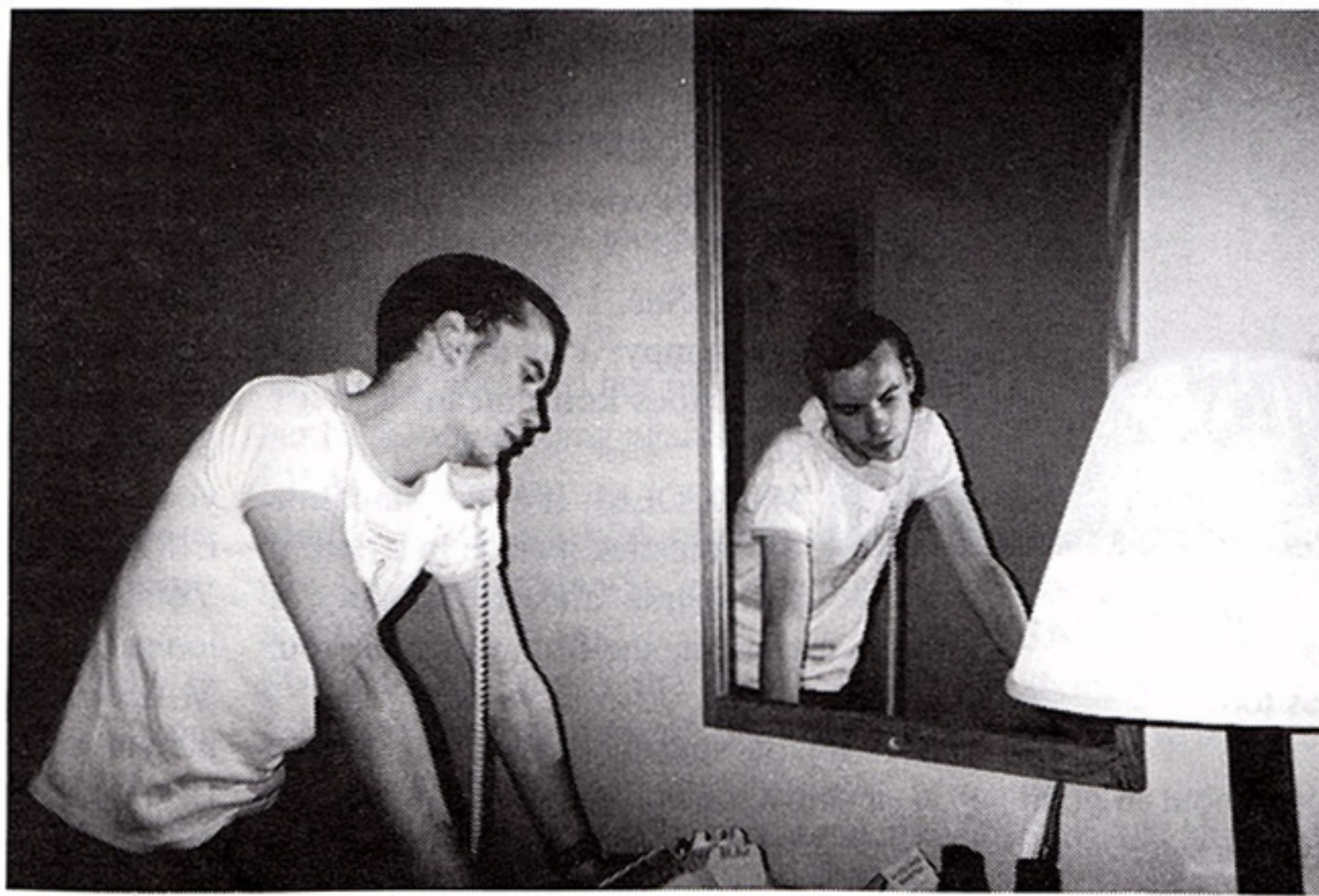
TR: What's another Scottish term for balling?

AIDAN: Get your end away.

LISA: Hey, I got a good one for you guys! Stick the creamy end of the fuck-stick into

the hairy end of the guts.

AIDAN: That's too much of a mouthful, I



David - The only good-looking Scottish person on the face of the earth?

think. It's like, "Hi, how you doing?" "The creamy end of the...of the..." By the time they got halfway through, you wouldn't even care anymore. You'd say, "Fuck you," and walk away.

LISA: No, it's totally awesome, man, totally appropriate. I know it's gonna be on your next album, I just know it. [*In a bad Scottish mumble:*] "And then I stuck the creamy end of my fuck-stick into the hair end of her guts. And then something bad happened." Classic Arab Strap, right there. What do you guys think about LL Cool J rolling up just one of his pant legs, even at this late date?

SARAH: He's queer, basically. He's a turd merger.

LISA: He's not a turd merger! He loves his wife.

AIDAN: Wanker.

LISA: You don't just say LL Cool J is a wanker.

SARAH: He is a wanker!

LISA: He just did that amazing song about his father beating him up.

MALCOLM: He's a Mason.

TR AND SARAH: Amazing?

LISA: No, he said "a Mason."

SARAH: He said "amazing."

MALCOLM: I said "a Mason."

LISA: Now, Miss Translator, who's down with the Scottish?

SARAH: No, I got it right, but TR said amazing.

LISA: No, I know everything about the Scottish.

SARAH: Malcolm doesn't like me very much. He gave me a dirty look.

LISA: Who do hate more, Sarah or me? I know you love Grandma. Everybody loves Grandma.

MALCOLM: I don't hate anyone here.

LISA: Who do you like the most?

MALCOLM: Probably myself. And Aidan's dong.

TR: [*examining the painting of Aidan*] The arms are weird.

LISA: The whole thing is very upsetting, I don't know. Do you realize how upsetting this thing is? It's totally deformed. Every aspect is deformed.

SARAH: How large

is the original painting? [*Aidan indicates almost lifesize.*]

GRANDMA: Is this flaccid or erect?

AIDAN: I don't actually remember. Maybe half and half. I was quite cold.

LISA: How long did you sit there naked in front of this woman?

AIDAN: About an hour, I think.

LISA: An hour, that's it? An hour only to make this masterpiece?

AIDAN: She did sketches first.

LISA: So how do you feel, Malcolm, about not having naked you on it? I mean, his *girlfriend's* on there, where's naked you?

MALCOLM: I feel quite good about it.

LISA: Since you don't have a girlfriend, do you get lucky all the time?

MALCOLM: No, I'm unlucky because I don't have a girlfriend. I come from a small town where there's nobody there, basically.

LISA: No, I mean on tour. Because you're the only one without a girlfriend, do you bear the burden of the tour debauchery all alone? Do you carry a heavy load?

MALCOLM: Not really, no.

LISA: But your whole thing is about sex. You got a reputation.

MALCOLM: Aidan writes song about sex, but I write really emotional music, you know?

LISA: So what else do you write about, besides sex, Aidan?

AIDAN: Nothing.

LISA: Don't you write about philosophy?

AIDAN: I've got one song about philosophy, and it goes, "You're fucked."





*Malcolm & Lisa*

And that's as far as it goes.

LISA: It's about loneliness too.

AIDAN: Mebbe, yes.

LISA: What are you writing about in your music, Malcolm, seriously?

MALCOLM: Nothing.

LISA: Where do you get your inspiration?

MALCOLM: Nowhere.

LISA: Dead end there. So Grandma, give me your pool tips.

GRANDMA: Grandma, I gotta take a whiz.

LISA: Grandma beats my ass at pool. She's got a lot of tips, but she's not sharing them with me. Another dead end.

SARAH: Never shit in a pool. That's my tip.

MALCOLM: Never shit on a pool table.

LISA: That's a hot tip from a far-away land: never shit on a pool table. Malcolm, you're destroying your life with cigarettes, booze and that unattractive hat.

TR: That's like sex drugs and rock-n-roll.

LISA: Oh yeah, fishermen hats are total allegory for rock-n-roll. We're gonna be pen-pals, aren't we?

MALCOLM: Yes.

LISA: You're gonna send me postcards from Greece.

MALCOLM: Yes.

LISA: Does he actually hate me?

SARAH: I think he's dry.

LISA: Oh, I never get those. I never get the dry humor. If you want me to get your jokes, just laugh at them first.

TR: That's how Americans announce that a joke has been told: by laughing.

MALCOLM: Can I tell you a joke? What does an inflatable woman doll and a woman have in common? They both go down on you if you stab them.

LISA: What do you mean stab them? Like stick your penis in them?

MALCOLM: No. It's a joke.

TR: You didn't laugh when you said it, that's why we didn't get it.

MALCOLM: Sorry. What do inflatable women and real women have in common?

SARAH: What?

MALCOLM: They both go down on you if you knife them. Ha, ha!

LISA: See, I see you laughing, I'm happy. I'm laughing. But what does knife mean? I don't get it.

MALCOLM: It's the punchline --if you stick a knife in a doll, it will burst, and if you stick a knife in a woman, she'll go down on you. It's a joke.

LISA: If you stab a woman, she'll give you a blowjob? Is that what you're saying?

MALCOLM: It's a fucking joke, OK?

LISA: No, no, but--

MALCOLM: Just fucking laugh and nod your head.

GRANDMA: Woah, woah, woah. What's the funny part? Is there a funny part?

MALCOLM: Is it offensive? Think of someone you don't like. Eh, what does an inflatable doll and Bill Clinton have in common? They'll both go down on you if you knife them.

LISA: No, still not funny.

SARAH: I have one! What's the worst part about fucking a three-year-old?

LISA: That's not funny. That's not even funny.

SARAH: Oh, I forgot you have a three-year-old! Having to change the diaper after.

LISA: Yeah, fine, whatever. I'm not laughing.

GRANDMA: I know some knock-knock jokes that are funnier than that.

TR: How do you get a gay man to fuck a woman?

LISA: It's totally easy. There's no gay man who won't fuck a woman.

TR: Put shit in her pussy.

SARAH: Yucky.

GRANDMA: This is an area I'm not sure I'm ready to dabble in. But there is one thing I know: If the dong has arisen, the dong will fly at noon.

TR: Hear, hear. The truth.

LISA: Wanna hear my description of Arab Strap? Those two [David and ?] are the limber ones, and Malcolm and Aidan are the seedy ones.

MALCOLM: Aidan's the seedy one.

LISA: What are you? [He doesn't answer.] You're nothing. You're inscrutable. You're like a fishing cap on a question

mark.

MALCOLM: Aw, look, I try so hard to be aloof, but I'm too friendly about it.

LISA: No, you're aloof. You are aloof. You have a strange, slightly hostile, colorless face.

MALCOLM: OK.

LISA: I take your face as a challenge. You've been scowling at the table all night, and I want to force you to like me.

MALCOLM: I'm smiling and talking to you.

LISA: You're smiling a lipless smile. You're not looking at me. You haven't looked at me once.

MALCOLM: That's because you're right here at my side.

LISA: You're at my side, but I'm looking at you.

TR: He has the thousand-yard stare.

MALCOLM: Seven foot. Doesn't go beyond that. [Grandma makes a strange squeal.] I think Grandma's senile.

GRANDMA: What? What? Yes.

MALCOLM: See, it's something different then. If you asked your grandma if she was senile, she wouldn't say yes. She'd go, "Piano."

LISA: Let's have a staring contest.

MALCOLM: All right.

SARAH: Tick-tick-tick.

MALCOLM: You just looked away.

LISA: I didn't look away.

MALCOLM: You're cock-eyed then.

LISA: I'm not cock-eyed; I'm looking at your eyeballs.

MALCOLM: I know. When you concentrate on things, you look cock-eyed.

TR: Thirty seconds.

LISA: I could sit here all night, I don't have to go on stage in an hour.

MALCOLM: You won't get bored?

LISA: If you get bored, Malcolm, just look away. Awww, I won! "I am the champion! I am the champion!"

MALCOLM: I just didn't want to be a part of your game.

LISA: That's just because you don't have what it takes.

MALCOLM: I know, you won, congratulations.

LISA: You know what, you say that trying to be sarcastic, but you know what? It's the truth. I did win, and it is congratulations.

MALCOLM: Sarcasm is the truth.

LISA: That's right. The grain of truth is that I won.

MALCOLM: But you said that to me as if I didn't know that. You thought you were



being clever.

LISA: No, it's just your high-and-mighty attitude needs reinforced taking-down.

MALCOLM: I am not high-and-mighty.

LISA: You are.

MALCOLM: I am not.

LISA: You think you are so-o-o sophisticated.

GRANDMA: Yo brother, you think your dick is like, hitting the wall and shit.

MALCOLM: Oui. Of course I'm fucking sophisticated, oui.

LISA: The fact is, you think if you choose to lose, then you didn't really lose. But you *lost*, mothermakerlover.

MALCOLM: I chose to lose to make it easy on you, because otherwise you would've been sitting there all night.

LISA: We wouldn't have been sitting there all night because you would've lost at some point. I have patience. It has to be that I will win every time.

MALCOLM: At least you kept your self-esteem. Because I was thinking, "I'll blow smoke in your eyes, then I'm going to pour a beer in them, then I'm going to [pull your hair down?]." No one said you can't cheat.

LISA: Yeah, but you didn't do it, did you? If you had done it, it would be a totally different thing. I would've had some respect for you.

MALCOLM: I chose to lose to save your face.

LISA: No, you chose to lose because it was inevitable.

MALCOLM: Maybe I just have a short attention span. Next time....

LISA: OK, let's do it again, no rules. On the count of three, ready? [*Lisa and Malcolm simultaneously poke each other's eyes.*] Augh!

MALCOLM: You looked down first.

LISA: Yeah, I did. You won. OK, ready? One, two, three, go!

TR: She won that one.

MALCOLM: But she just pulled my fisherman's hat over

my face! I had no chance there.

LISA: We said no rules.

MALCOLM: No rules to start with, but we make them up as we go along. And I say there's no pulling down of fisherman's hats, so--

LISA: Ready, go! Aaaugh! Ow! Stop that!

TR: Thumb fight!

LISA: OK, I'm ready.

TR: Grandma, hold her other hand behind her back--she's going against regulations.

LISA: I got you!

MALCOLM: I got both of your thumbs!

LISA: No, no--that's *me* having *your* thumbs!

MALCOLM: That's the crappiest game I've ever fucking played! Let's do paper, scissors, stone.

LISA: OK. [*Malcolm slaps me hard in the face.*] Aaaaai!

MALCOLM: I'm a fucking winner!

TR: Oh man, sly.

LISA: Wow.

MALCOLM: Have you heard of Scottish paper-scissors-stone? It's paper-scissors-stone-gun. Gun beats all.

LISA: OK, one, two, three, go! [*Shouts as we slap and hit each other. Then we do it again.*] I won both those, I think. You're a wizard in the studio, but you fight like an

intellectual.

MALCOLM: That's the first time I've been called intelligent.

LISA: I didn't call you intelligent. You lost like 15 out of 20 games.

MALCOLM: I can't believe this. My first time in Boston and I've been totally demoralized. I can't even go on stage.

TR: Is your guitar just gonna hang limp at your side?

MALCOLM: Fucking right.

LISA: What do you think my sign is?

MALCOLM: I don't know, but I think your moon's in Uranus.

SARAH: What about Nessie? Talk to us about Nessie.

TR: Is it true you all killed her and ate her?

SARAH: Have you ever seen Nessie?

TR: Have you ever ridden Nessie?

GRANDMA: Has Nessie ever arisen from the water and sucked your cock?

SARAH: Is there a lot of Nessie talk where you're from? No?

LISA: Nessie is not incredibly interesting.

MALCOLM: It's like if I asked you, "How's the Empire State Building?"

TR: Nessie doesn't come out very often.

LISA: And when she does, it's like, "OK, she has a long neck. She's got a big back.

Big deal."

SARAH: How many humps does Nessie have?

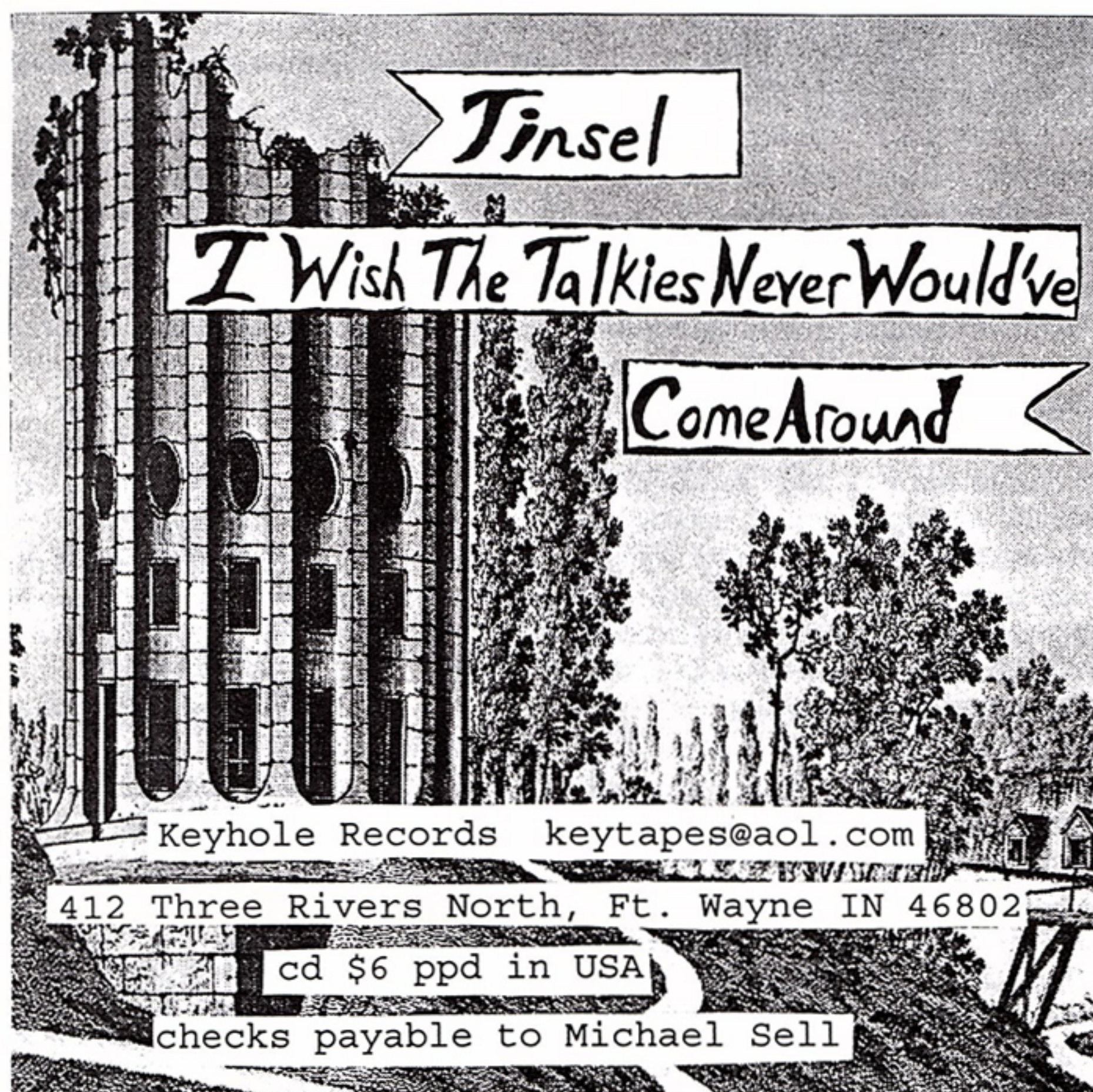
MALCOLM: Just one a week.

SARAH: Nessie chebs.

LISA: This is ridiculous. I apologize for my countryfolk. I should get you away from these plebeians, we could talk about something real.

SARAH: Oh you shut up. You brought it up.

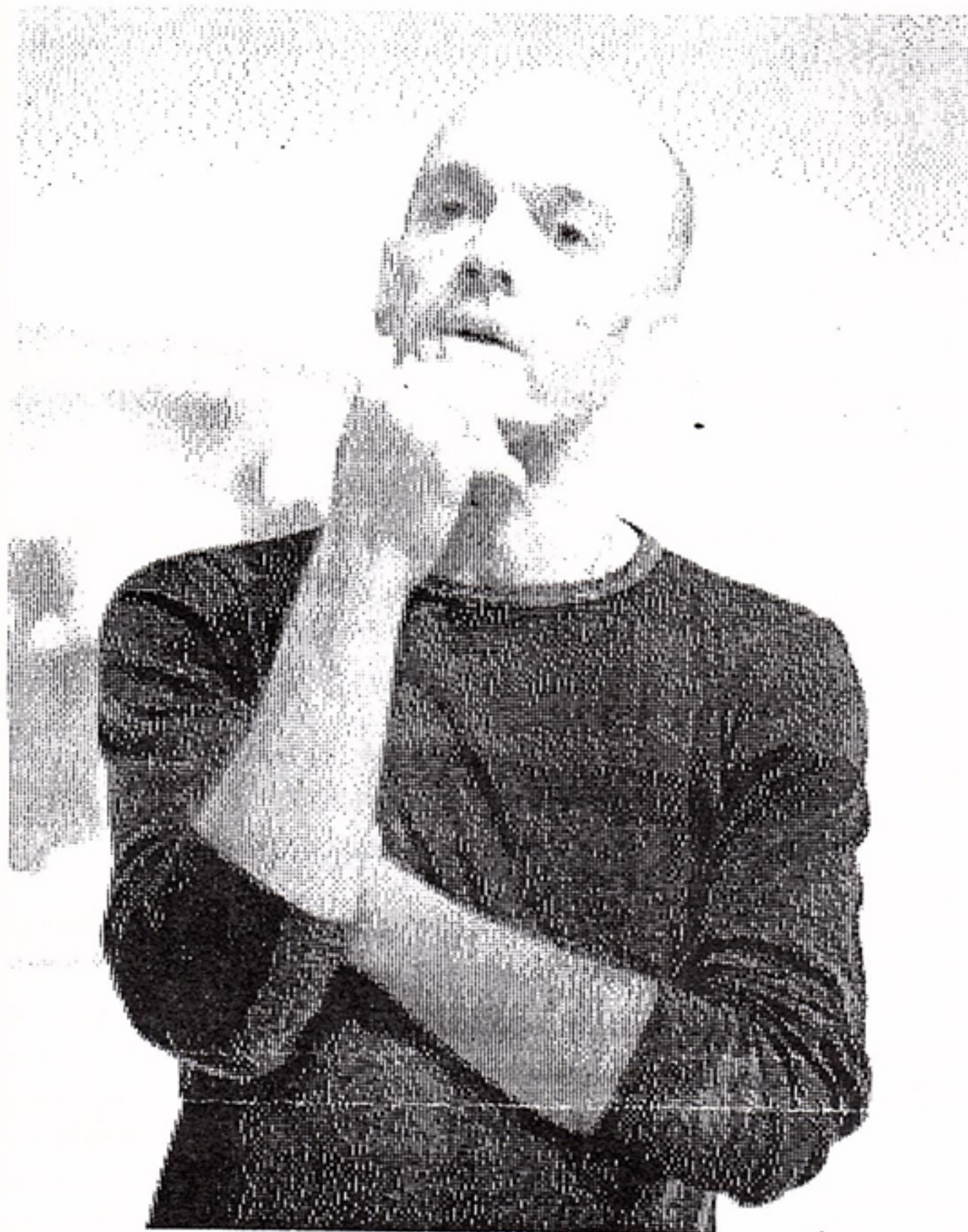
LISA: I did not. I would never say anything about the Loch Ness monster to a Scottish person. I'm above that. I know a lot about the Scots. I know two things: they're slightly red all over, and they're the slangmasters.





# That's Me In The Lens Cap

by David Charles Ghoukassian



OK. So here is the scene: Rock Star Michael Stipe (singer for the pop supergroup Rapid Eye Movement) is holding a press conference for an art show featuring his photographs. He is promoting a book, I forget the name of it, featuring these same photos. My friend is hired by The Associated Press to photograph the bald singing poet for all the papers and rock-n-roll magazines. I am invited to sneak in as his "writer."

Many people have problems accepting Stipe as a superstar because he is too serious and P.C.-orientated, but I'm still a big fan so fuck you. Stipe has a beautiful, smooth yet often gravelly voice which he weaves dreamily over dirty twangy pop music. And he writes great lyrics like "dreaming of Maria Connors/whoever she is" and "a candy bar/a falling star/a greeting from Dr. Seuss." The point is, I consider Stipe a talent and a star and I was going to meet him. I was happy and nervous.

The room is filled with legitimate writers and photographers. Michael Stipe is very intelligent. You can tell because he pauses uncomfortable amounts of time before answering questions, staring intently into the air between him and the reporters. He took a 24-second pause before this reply: "Inasmuch as one should be separating Michael Stipe the character from Michael Stipe the human being, you should separate Michael Stipe the artist from the artwork of Michael Stipe. This being the end of the 20th century, it all blends together via media. Blame it on Warhol!"

So how was the artwork of Michael Stipe? Well, I never

really look at the art at openings. I judge art by the amount of exciting or famous people who show up, and what hor d'oerves are served. The food was standard--brie and fruit. I was excited by these delicious pears they had. They were exceptional. Stipe gets a C+ for hor d'oerves. The star count was extremely disappointing. His photos were of Kim Gordon, Patti Smith, REM, Allen Ginsberg, but the crowd was all local writers and aspiring rock stars. No one presently famous. Stipe gets a C - for star power.

Glamour count was also very low. Stipe himself was a lot wrinklier than the post-packaging version on MTV. Rumors are that he is bisexual. Here is confirmation: He was wearing sandals and puckering and posing and sauntering around like a \$2-whore.

After the Q&A session he took an intermission, apparently to change his clothes. He reemerged in a black suit and black shoes, mingling and signing autographs. There were a handful of pretty faces present, but no moviestars or supermodels. Stipe gets a C for glamour.

Stipe's photographs were pretty cool I guess. No one complained about them. My personal favorite was the one my friend Aaron took for the AP newswire (above). It really sums up "Mr. Michael Stipe" (poet, singer, artist, star, human being): Perpetually Posing and Pensive.

After "we" shot the AP photo, Mr. Stipe took Aaron's camera, looked through the lens, pointed at me--me!, focused and clicked a photo. But he left the lens cap on!

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UNDERGROUND



# Money

LISA: What qualifies you to talk about money?

CHRIS HALL: Well, not much because I was a political science major, but I am accounts manager at a publishing company and I have some good friends in the financial world. I just learned a lot about how big money is made from a friend of mine in San Francisco. He works for hedge funds or hedge trusts. They make more money off companies failing than succeeding. He explained to me that it's like a horse race. Wall Street is basically legalized gambling. I thought you had to actually buy shares--and you can do that, mutual funds do that, brokerage houses do that--but hedge funds call up a company and say, "I'm gonna bet that at a certain point, you're not gonna be making enough money." And at that certain point, you can call them, and they have to pay you billions of dollars. But if their stock is up, they say "Ha ha" and you have to pay them all this money. At no point do you actually own any of their stock. It's all conjecture.

LISA: OK, say I give \$2,000 to--

CHRIS: See, I tried that argument with him. I said, "Let's talk about a dollar." He said no. He said, "It's more like a horse race where you have five horses, and four horses are gonna lose. And if you know which horses are gonna lose, and you bet on them losing, and especially if you project at which point in the race they're gonna lose, and you're right, you're gonna make a ton of money. However, if the horse you bet on to lose actually wins, you're screwed."

LISA: Companies are doing this?

CHRIS: Yes.

LISA: With whose money?

CHRIS: With their own.

LISA: From investors in the company? Could I put my money in there?

CHRIS: If you had several hundred millions of dollars. These are heavyweights. We're talking about billion-dollar portfolios. You get together four or five major investment firms with \$250 million or so each, and you have a company run by analysts. How they make money is not necessarily off stocks doing well. They make money off some things failing. So my friend's job is to meet with these crazy,

high-power people who lie to him and say, "Everything's fine, we're doing a lot of profit this year" and actually look at the numbers and see what they're releasing, and then guess how much short of what they project they're gonna do they're gonna really do. The market's driven by projections. I was driving around San Francisco smoking a joint as he was telling me all this, I was just like, "Wow!"

LISA: Something that fascinated me when I started reading about this is that before the free market economy, there was no idea like a free market economy. I thought that throughout history, everything stays the same, it just gets a different name. But in the history of economics, they seem to be saying this was something actually new. For the first time, you could change your place in life. Always before, you were born a pauper or royalty, and that's where you stayed.

CHRIS: Right, a caste system.

LISA: And that was it, forever. And for your descendants. With the invention of free market economy, anyone can slide up or down--though of course most people do stay where they are, and so will their descendants. But the ability to control your fate economically was new. Is that right?

CHRIS: Overall, yes. Definitely as far as Europe goes. I think the Greeks and the Egyptians would sometimes bring some of their slaves into citizenship. But overall, they had a perfect system: we rule, you don't. Too bad.

LISA: Also, capitalism made everyone get the same measurements and worth for

things. So that made travel more possible.

CHRIS: Yeah, so you could trade. Definitely free market grew with the amount

of international trade.

LISA: So I wonder if there's some new system emerging now that I can't see, changing things in ways I can't see. Because of course everyone resisted free market economy at first. People were even put to death for it! With all these companies merging, I thought maybe we were heading for a one-company world.

CHRIS: I don't think that's going to happen. Competition is too strong, and

there's chance. Much of the market is driven on software and communications right now, and my friend says that's way, way, way overvalued. No one's making profits--for example, Amazon.com. There's just so many companies that maybe in a few years will make profits but they're not now. People are investing like crazy in them because they think it's the next hot thing. Well what if it's not?

LISA: Computers do hurt your eyes after a while.

CHRIS: Not just to read, but to go shopping. You want to touch clothes or cars before you buy them. But you can't underestimate it either. Alexander Graham Bell invented the phone and Western Union had a chance to buy out the patent. They offered some pathetic amount like \$100,000; Bell said no, this is gonna be huge. Western Union could've been the biggest company in the world right now, but they blew it. They didn't think the phone would catch on. So when you see an emerging technology.... With computers, people are making sure they don't miss that opportunity, now that communications have dominated this half-a-century. It's hard to say how the internet will go. David Bowie has his own server, there are so many servers, you don't need AOL. There is a lot competition on the web. And of course America has anti-trust laws, which is Microsoft's big problem. They're being sued for putting a surfing thing in their hard drive.

LISA: How did anti-trust laws come about?

CHRIS: In the late 1800s when Carnegie owned all the coal mills, all the steel mills, all the railroads that brought the coal to the steel mills. They said we can't have one person owning all the means of production, you gotta break it up. Same with Microsoft or AT&T.

LISA: Would you say that establishing trade routes in the 1500s would be equivalent to communications now, as the big, explosive thing?

CHRIS: That's where the rise in the merchant class came about, right? You'd import cardamom or whatever, suddenly you have to have a store there, and a distributor, and all these things come up, whereas before you just had your potatoes or whatever else you grew. That's how the whole middle class came about. Suddenly

Chris Hall  
by Matt Jasper

Chris Hall--famous bass player whose dry wit and magnetic manhood allow him to captivate ladies way better looking than he is.



you needed people who could lend money and people who could communicate with foreigners.

LISA: I was just reading about cartography--it said that up until about 1770, maps were drawn more inward-directed, mystic- or philosophy-driven. They weren't objectively accurate. They were being more religious than scientific in their quest for knowledge.

CHRIS: Like Israel's huge and Africa's small?

LISA: I guess. I'm just looking at all these things as how were people stuck in the myths of their times so I can figure out what big myths I'm stuck in in my times. So they were swamped in religion, and we're scientific. But science has its own fallacies in vision--which we don't see, because we're so scientific.

CHRIS: One good thing about science as opposed to religion is it evolves. It's OK to say you're wrong, I'm right. In church that's not cool.

LISA: You think so? Religion evolves.

CHRIS: Well, yeah--with a lot of suffering. They'll kill you for a while, and then finally they'll accept the new idea.

LISA: People die for science too. Actually, you're right--it's the church that put new scientific thinkers to death, burnt them as heretics.

CHRIS: Religion is a lot about dogma, whereas in science every Ph.D is trying to debunk whatever's going on, and it's completely accepted. And I think it's the same in the financial world. Every 25-year-old MBA who comes out wants to be the best there is, a superstar, wants to kick his boss's ass--and they all know that. My friend's boss--he was in his late 20s, and he woke up on Black Monday... remember that crash in '88? He woke up that morning and convinced all his workers to sell their four-letter stocks--like Coke, IBM, all the major blue chips. He made zillions of dollars that day. How did he know? No one knows. He did a lot of research and it was just intense intuition. Now he's loaded, and completely revered in the financial community. Just for that one day. If he had been wrong, he would've been completely screwed. Ruined. It seems almost mystical. Because all day long, every day, they're all just trying to guess--and then one person gets it, or a few people get it.

LISA: I'm reading Robert Anton Wilson right now, so I'm thinking all mystical and devious.

CHRIS: He's into all that weird shit. I'm not really convinced, though, how much he really knows and how much he's just speculating.

LISA: Really? I'm utterly convinced by everything I read. And then I read the opposite, and I'm utterly convinced by that too. Well, I was hoping you'd come over today and say, "The way you're looking at the world is completely wrong." Well, not completely wrong, but completely in the past. "And this is the new way that no one has recognized yet, and I'm telling just you."

CHRIS: I'm not there yet, nor is anyone I know.

LISA: Some people are there.

CHRIS: Yeah, or they hire people to know for them. "Here's my \$300 million."

LISA: Oh. I was hoping to buy it with just charm and chance.

CHRIS: There's whole armies of people trying to get there every day, with a whole lot of pressure on them.

LISA: What's the life of the financier really like? Does he really sweat buckets all the time?

CHRIS: Yeah, it's awful. If you fuck up, you lose shitloads of money for people. My friend gets up at five every day, gets home at six or seven, works six days a week. And goes out and parties too. They play like demons.

LISA: What kind of human beings can do that?

CHRIS: Ones that die young. By the time they reach their late 30s or so, they're burned. They quit and do other things. But by then they've probably made so much money, they can retire. It takes its toll. But it's like being in a band--that takes its toll. It's exhausting touring constantly, partying hard, putting all your energy into something and it may fail.

LISA: But at least it's art. Money is just a common mirage, it's not real.

CHRIS: There must be an art to making money, or else everyone would be good at it--whether its divination or manipulation or what.

LISA: That's true. Like with writing, which I guess is an art, or at least expression, it really is just a web of words--it's not exactly real. I mean, it comes so easy for me to construct something convincing

or sincere, I almost think I must be lying.

CHRIS: A lot of the financial world is figuring out when people are lying to you or being honest. And then what to do with that information.

LISA: It's just arranging. Which is what writing is, and painting, and music.

CHRIS: A lot of the music world is how do you know what song is gonna be huge?

LISA: But that's the business end of it. That's the A&R guy's job.

CHRIS: Still, you have to be in touch with the audience, with where you're at. Predicting. And then no matter how good it is, there need to be people who know how to get it out there, or else no one will hear it. It takes a team to get a hit with a song or a book, and it takes a team in the financial world too. No one just wakes up one morning and knows how every company is doing. You need a lot of input from a lot of people.

LISA: Do you think anyone is really friends in the financial world?

CHRIS: People come and go. Trust is...crazy. But the entertainment industry is like that too.

LISA: What about marriage? Is it better for business to be married or not?

CHRIS: It's good if you have a high-powered marriage, no kids. For weekends go helicopter skiing or whatever--blow \$20,000 on a weekend.

LISA: See, that's just like musicians too! All those heavy metal guys and their drug parties. The Foo Fighters took all these people on a skiing trip and paid for everything. My friend didn't even know them, and they took him. But money is *never* really real. It's based on gold in a vault somewhere and inflation and the government being stable. Whereas music is real. There's still songs from B.C. You can't destroy it.

CHRIS: And no one cares what the Greek's financial situation was 2,000 years ago.

LISA: I care.

CHRIS: You do? Why?

LISA: Well, I never really thought about it, but I think if they think right, I mean if they had an accurate grasp on the world of their time, then it follows they would be financially prosperous. Therefore their philosophy carries more weight.

CHRIS: And financial prosperity creates an arts class. Without that everyone's just hunting and gathering.

LISA: Yeah. Just hanging out, getting high off those coca leaves.

Achtung! Be part of an intercultural exchange program: Send me strange American things and I'll send you strange German things. Garantiert! Burghard Arndt, Prenzlauer Allee 200, 10405 Berlin.



# Penis, Penis, Penis

article and illustration by Holly Day

Note: This originally started out as an article about blowjobs, but after much soul searching, I realized that I just don't know enough about blowjobs to competently write a whole article about them. So then I thought I'd just write about penises--and then realized that I don't really know anything about those slippery little devils either. So I've decided to just share some stories and the little bit of interesting knowledge I've picked up over the years about cock, because it is still a damned interesting thing to write about at 3 o'clock in the morning, even if I don't know anything about it.

## Three Interesting Facts About The Penis

#1. Fire is bad. Men generally do not like to have fire anywhere near their Mr. Microphone, although a surprising amount do enjoy a little ice. Or a lot. "Just shovel it on, baby," says one source, we'll call him, ah, Phil Knider. "About a half-pound bag of crushed ice on a hot day just puts me over the edge. It's hard to explain--you'd have to have a penis to understand."

Another source actually prefers cubes to the crushed ice. "Really, a large, solid block of ice on my testicles is ideal, but you have to go to special places to buy block ice," says this source. "However, it's definitely a summer thing."

#2. Uncircumcised penises are inflatable when flaccid. This is weird, but true. They even look like balloons--just don't blow too hard.

#3. Boys like to stick their penises in just about anything. I never knew this until my ex-husband told me. Apparently, he used to just run around ramming things with his dick, and even tried to shove it in an electrical outlet once, but it didn't fit.

## An Interesting Story About A Penis

I used to date a guy that liked me to dress his penis up in

doll clothes. We'd do copious amounts of amphetamines and have sex until it hurt, then play runway model with his dick. I got really good at crocheting little hats for his penis, little Rastafarian tams and stocking caps, and worked my way up to little jackets and scarves, and then pose the stiff little arms of the jackets into different positions to fit the character of whatever the ensemble was supposed to represent. My favorite was the Elvis Dick--a white jacket with yellow trim and a pile of wadded-up black yarn for hair, holding a little cardboard cut-out guitar. I also held much fondness for the Ski-Jock Penis, which was basically a tiny stocking cap, a striped, crocheted tube that fit snug around the shaft with arms, and a garbage



Joe Ski Penis

tie in each "hand." There was also a Dr. Dick and a Southern Belle Dick, which I didn't make clothes for, they were just some clothes off a doll my Grandma had

sent me, but they weren't as interesting to me in the long run. Dr. Dick was weird and sort of creepy, and the Southern Belle Dick just didn't turn me on. The relationship ended when my boyfriend found God and I didn't.

## Pet Names For Your Pet Penis

Guys like it when you name their penis for them. Here are a few to start you off if you can't think of any on your own. Enjoy!

Mr. Microphone  
Pablo Neruda  
The Boss  
Simon Le Bon  
God  
Mister  
Julio Iglesias  
Jim  
Dave  
Jennifer



-----advertisement-----



# Jan Terri

Jan Terri, 5'1", along with her friends with amazing hair, prances around singing about the dangers of love, being a chauffeur and traveling to Mars, in a young voice with either a speech defect or just a very strange accent, to rich pop music often including a saxophone. The lady is well on her way to becoming an overground underground figure along the lines of The Shaggs or William Shatner's singing career. Her cultural references are quite different from the other artists featured in this magazine, and she's the only one to get a video featured on *Beavis & Butthead*. We sent the ever ready Bengala to investigate the phenomenon.

BENGALA: How did your singing career begin?

JAN: I used to model for Clairol, for the Midwest Beauty Show. They used to do my hair for that. And I was in a band with ladies from PTA. I was the youngest member. The oldest member was...let's see, she's now 91. My mom was in the band. What they did was they took kazoos and mounted them onto paper towel rolls with tape, then they put aluminum foil around them and at the end was one of those funnels. We used bottle tops for keys and then for those clutch things on the sides, we used plastic spoons. My mom made a clarinet. Mine was a saxophone. We performed with those kazoo instruments, and then a lady who played a wash basin, but she died. So I started to play the drums. We used to sing all over the place and we got paid. There was a whole bunch of us, like ten ladies.

BENGALA: You used to race hot rods.

JAN: High revved up cars. It was good training for what I do now for work--drive a limo.

BENGALA: Have you had lots of famous people in your limo?

JAN: Yeah. Blossom was especially nice. I gave her a tape of my music.

BENGALA: The cover of your CD *High Risk* has you riding a rather euphoric-looking horse in beautiful soft-focus photography.

JAN: I used to ride a long time ago. I still do a little bit. That horse must have been 14 or 15 hands high. This guy was humongus and he even made me look

humongus on him. That was pretty cool.

BENGALA: It's a nice picture.

JAN: I tell everybody that's my husband.

BENGALA: You have a song about the IRS.

JAN: I'm not afraid of those people no more.

BENGALA: You were afraid of them?

JAN: Well, yeah. You go for a tax audit, that's scary. The day I went to get audited, I got super sick. What's the only thing they got Al Capone on? It was tax evasion, right? Didn't get him for anything else. And what is Al Capone? Al Capone's Italian and I'm Italian and it was February, right around February 14th. And all the



ones that went first to be audited were all the Italians. And the next day, after getting audited, my mom rushed me to the hospital and they found out I had a bleeding ulcer. I was paying my taxes. It got cleared up because I threatened Kansas City that I'd come down there and blow them away. And now it's not scary. I'll say it on the phone. I'm not afraid of you bloodsuckers! I'm sure they're laughing on the phone. BENGALA: "Journey to Mars" is your big hit?

JAN: Yeah. Everybody loves that. The only thing is I was being nice throwing candy out into the audience and you people are animals. They threw it right back at me. If you ever got hit by a Milky Way.... And that costume, you know, that space suit I wear--it's really hot! Whew.

BENGALA: Are those all your friends in the videos?

JAN: Yeah, Michelle and them. They usually do my hair. They have a hair salon so I was telling them I wanted to do a

video. And they were like OK, OK, and they wanted to be part of the video.

BENGALA: Everyone looks like they're having such a great time.

JAN: Well, yeah. It was freezing that day. One video after another. Click click click.

BENGALA: Your videos have made you a cult figure around Chicago. It's amazing how many people have seen them.

JAN: Is that good to have a cult following?

Post Script by Bengala: In September, Marilyn Manson asked Miss Jan Terri to perform in Los Angeles for his girlfriend's (who is evidently the actress from *Scream*?) birthday party. Jan didn't know who he was and asked me if I knew anything about him and if she'd get in trouble for wearing Mickey Mouse ears during the show. I said pull out all the stops, baby. You've hit the big time.

Indeed, she was treated like a princess--limousine, fancy suite and a bodyguard! She played an hour set (including a Rock'n'Roll Santa encore). The only moment of derision was when she had her assistants strap a hip pack to her and an audience member blurted out: "Why's she putting that stupid thing on?" Miss Terri, pillar of professionalism ignored the comment and went into her next number in which she threw Milky Ways into the gathering. The derisor was apparently won over by the act. MM and JT exchanged autographed cds and had pictures taken together. The glam-goth hinted that he might want to do a couple shows with queen of country-space-love-pop.

JT, PO Box 813, Franklin Park IL 60131

DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES  
A highlight of the Teen Beat generation, Daryl Hall and John Oates are back with a new album and new hair. Debates over which one I don't remember is cuter may have subsided, but

the debates "but" who can't say that they've had hits such as "Rich Girl," "Family Man" and "Private Eyes" rattling around who can't say!

7  
CONTRIBUTED BY JOHN EDELSTEIN



# Sean Lennon

I thought I would hate Sean Lennon's CD--I was thinking, "Mama's boy, always shows up at parties, I don't like his face...." But I liked it! It's Lawrence Welky, beachy, lovey. Very positive, rainy, feely, gentle. It's all about feeling things with his first love, new girlfriend Yuka.

The live set began with the five or six members trying to look like what I thought they thought were birds; grown men and women, several with pot bellies and dreamy looks in their eyes, flapping their arms slowly. But maybe it was Shiva. Screeching feedback accompanied, and it was good. Then it melted into the songs off the CD, which sounded exactly like the CD, so we left.

The interview earlier that night was full of pauses and was extremely uncomfortable for a reason I couldn't put my finger on. While Sean Lennon is congenial, there's something unrealistic about him. Matt Jasper suggests that having extreme wealth and fame gives one the same relationship to the world that being crazy does: Sean Lennon can call up his manager or whoever it is they call and get a meeting set up with whomever he wants to meet. And so, in his reality, can the crazy man.

SEAN LENNON [*looking at Rollerderby 23*]: Intense.

LISA: I really liked your album a lot.

SEAN: Yeah.

LISA: I'm a big Lawrence Welk fan, and what you do has that same happiness that does not seem at all possible for real human beings. It's really scary to be simple and happy like that.

SEAN: Right. It's definitely something that I try to do and doesn't come naturally. It's not like I'm innately jolly. I feel if I strive towards being happy then I'll be happy. I feel like we really control our own future with our outlook.

LISA: There are psychological tests that have proved that if you manifest the physical signs of happiness, like smiling, then even if you are angry inside, you will become truly happy. You will get the happy chemistry going, and it's a real thing.

SEAN: That makes sense. It's all about chemicals in the brain.

LISA: Did you see your video on *12 Angry Viewers*?

SEAN: No. Oh no.

LISA: It was a beautiful video, but they all hated it. They all wanted you to get hit by that bus.

SEAN [*truly dismayed*]: Oh my god, that's

so mean.

LISA: Well they're really awful and they're always wrong. You got a score of 13 or something--super bad.

SEAN: Really?

LISA: I thought it reflected the song well; it was dreamy...perpetual walking, suspension of physical laws, people in the living room....

SEAN: I like it too. Thanks.

LISA: What do you have in your pocket right now?

SEAN: Nothing special. Some guitar picks. A Sexy Boy sticker. A fortune that says "Your life will be happy and peaceful."

LISA: Are you trying to control what press you'll do?

SEAN: More and more. I don't want to do much press, but you kind of have to. It sucks. Everything you might perceive about the media being fucked up and superficial and evil is true. It's real.

LISA: Do people lie? Do they attribute false quotes to you?

SEAN: Yeah. In England they'll make shit up. They made a whole article about my brother and me feuding. They just made it up totally. We have a fairly normal relationship. We have no contempt for each other at all. It's an evil world--the world of press. Plus I just don't think it's good for me. It's all "The Son of John Lennon," "The Son of John and Yoko." I don't think it helps with what I'm trying to do. I don't know what's going to help, though. I have to figure it out. It's hard, because even playing shows is, to a degree, playing to people who only want to see the son of John Lennon. Doing interviews, or just talking to people--they want to see the son of John Lennon. So I don't know what to do. I don't know how to get around it.

LISA: I was thinking it must be harder for you than anyone else on earth to make music because of that--because even the tiniest step you take, you know people are waiting to see, waiting to compare.

SEAN: The music part is the easiest part, actually. Music is just--that's what I do, you know what I mean? I'm really serious about it. It comes very naturally--it's not like I have to go out of my way. I'm a real musician and I write songs. I turned out to be a musician. People just see the son of a famous person, but that's not me.

LISA: What made you pick up the Jew's

Harp?

SEAN: I just like shit that makes noise. Anything. I'll play anything that makes a cool sound. But that's cool you recognized that.

LISA: Your music is...its sweetness is to other music's sweetness what a neon light is to a lightbulb. It's very bright, it's a brilliant amount of light, but it almost hurts, or irritates. I worry about your heart getting broken. How old are you?

SEAN: [*laughing*] 22. [*long, uncomfortable pause, which Sarah Stroger finally breaks by asking how long it took to record the album. Sean answers in a relieved voice.*] Two months. It was great.

At the time, I wasn't doing press, I had a kind of anonymous life. I just made the record because I was having fun with my girlfriend and it was just...really...fun. It was just cool. I wasn't thinking about public scrutiny.

LISA: A lot of people hate you for a lot of reasons.

SEAN: Yeah, exactly.

LISA: Almost everyone I told I was coming to interview you had bad things to say about you, but they hadn't even heard the CD. One person said you went to like every party in New York for two whole years, and he was mad about that. He felt like that was a reason not to like you. I don't know where he's getting his information. Is it true?

SEAN: No.

LISA: And people who have heard your music, a lot of them are angry at you too. Because it's sweet.

SEAN: I think that makes people uncomfortable. I guess people hate me for the same reason they hated my mom--because she was different and honest and not a wife-model, you know what I mean? She was doing kind of weird stuff. And I think what I'm doing is not cool to do. It's my own personal trip.

LISA: I brought over subject headings that were in my email box, and I'll read them to you and you can make up what the email might be about, OK?

SEAN [*laughs nervously*]: OK.

LISA: "When things go well, then you can devote yourself to full-time destruction."

SEAN: That's a subject matter?

LISA: Yeah.

SEAN: Someone really emailed that to



you? You didn't make that up?

LISA: No--I wouldn't make that up!

SEAN: I don't know--it's hard to speculate.

LISA: It's a Rohrsarch test for you. If that was the heading of a letter you sent, what would the body of the letter be?

SEAN: A lot of people have self-destructive tendencies, and when things go well they sabotage their own success. They're afraid of succeeding--in a way it's a fear of mortality.

LISA: Because the steps of life are study, try, succeed, feed off the fat and then die?

SEAN: Yeah--if you never fulfill your dreams, maybe you're postponing reality...postponing your life and your death.

LISA: Here's the next one: "A toothless weekend."

SEAN: A toothless weekend? I don't know. I can't imagine what that might be about. You have weird friends.

LISA: "Conquer the world at 1 AM."

SEAN: I don't know, man.

LISA: Oh come on, you're supposed to be an *artist*.

SEAN: You want me to just make shit up? I don't know. Conquering the world has such a weird, violent, macho, egoistic connotation. Conquering things is so aggressive. What do people do at 1 AM?

LISA: "Freedom."

SEAN: Mm....

LISA: At this moment I think freedom to you would be getting away from me.

SEAN: I'm not uncomfortable--I'm just... whatever. I don't know how to help you with this stuff. What is freedom? I think we're all free. We all have choices.

LISA: Is one free in jail?

SEAN: You have choices in jail, about how you live your life. You have a lot of the same choices anybody does. [People who aren't in jail] are not completely free either.

LISA: "Slept on crank."

SEAN: That means you did coke all night and fell asleep.

LISA: "No, the love is all mine."

SEAN: I don't know.

LISA: It's your last one. Your *last one*.

SEAN: It's a response to someone who said the love is all theirs. I don't know--

ask Brandy.

LISA: You got some janitor pants on.

SEAN: [*actually offended*] Janitor pants? God, these aren't janitor pants. These are pleated Scottish pants. Janitor pants--tsk!

LISA: Oh. The janitors at my school wore pleated Scottish pants then. And that's a golfer shirt you got on there.

SEAN: LaCoste. I figured this is Boston, look Ivy League.

SARAH: What did you do today so far?

SEAN: We get one room for all of us, so we each took a turn taking a shower, then we came here and did soundcheck and then press, then do the show, then we drive to the next place. We sleep on the bus, arrive at the hotel, take a shower, and go to the club. It's a lot more intense a regime than I imagined it would be.

LISA: Do you like it?

SEAN: Yeah I do, actually!

LISA: The crowd here is really dull-

general, because it's less lyric-heavy?

SEAN: No, I don't think that's true. Miles Davis, Mingus, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker--they're all crazy egomaniacs. Like all artists. I listen to Indian classical music too.

LISA: Do you lift weights?

SEAN [*taken aback*]: No! Are you done?

LISA: Sure.

*At a restaurant.*

LISA: What's the deal with the 40-year-old girlfriend?

JESSICA HUNDLEY: She's 37, he's 22.

LISA: She looks 25, but he looks 13.

JESSICA: As soon as J. and I found out you were doing an interview, we knew you were going to ask him about that! We said, "Lisa will say it, she'll say anything!"

LISA: It was on my list of questions, but I didn't ask.

JESSICA: I'm so disappointed!

LISA: I'm changing. I don't derive as much satisfaction from others' discomfort as I used to. What do you think about his body?

JESSICA: His strangely...*soft* body? He's sort of unformed in his face and his body. He's sort of still in the embryo stage...gellatinous face....

SARAH: He has a turtle-like quality to his head and neck.

LISA: In photos it was disturbing how he looks

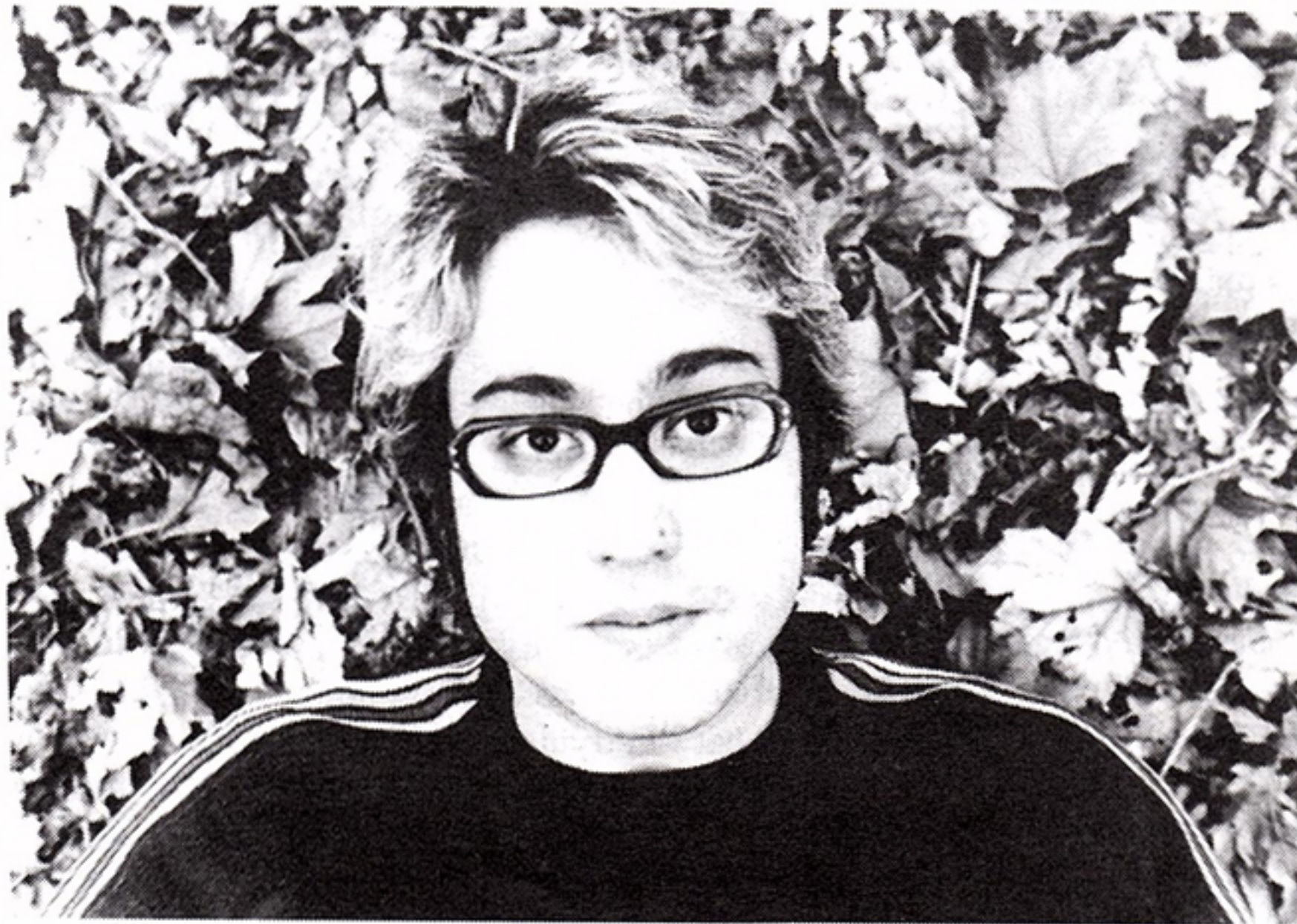
exactly like his father and exactly like his mother at the same time. How can someone look like two people who don't look like each other? I was very distressed.

JESSICA: He turns his head this way and you think, "Oh my god, he looks exactly like John Lennon." He turns his head this way and you think, "Oh my god, he looks exactly like Yoko Ono." You're like, "John!" "Yoko!" "John!" "Yoko!" But it never really comes together and forms this one--

LISA: Nobody else is like that. Other people look like their parents, and it's not like *that*.

JESSICA: It's because he's the fruit of their tremendous love.

LISA: In person his eyes are these liquid,



looking. Extremely subdued. They're all wearing khakis and no makeup and stand docilely in line.

SEAN: It depends on what city you're in. Sometimes I get all these young kids who are really cool, but sometimes I get these Beatles weirdos.

LISA: Nobody dances in Boston.

SEAN: It's sad.

SARAH: Are you a dancer?

SEAN: Yeah.

SARAH: What have you been listening to lately?

SEAN: Jazz. Miles Davis, Mingus. I like free form.

LISA: Do you think that jazz musicians are less obsessed with their own personality than other types of music, in



noncorporeal things, and the family resemblance is not so alarming.

JESSICA: He didn't look at me at all. I was trying to get him to, but he was fiddling with a pen the whole time. I think he's very thoughtful. I think he has his shit together a lot more than most 22-year-olds are given credit for.

J: I think his head is disproportionately large for his body.

SARAH: You know who has the biggest head? Robert Smith from the Cure. He has the biggest head I've ever seen! Very, very big. Mongoloid size.

J: Jimmy Page does too. And he looks just like Robert Smith.

JESSICA: It's this particular British face. There's only like five British faces. They're all inbred. Ugly race. We just saw *35 Up*.

LISA: That was a great documentary.

JESSICA: It's great, but you're like, "I never want to go to England, and all those people are hideous." They're all totally dull and bored and terrifying-looking.

LISA: What do you think about Sean Lennon's lyrics?

JESSICA: The boy should not be given a pen. Well, I feel bad for saying that. Let him write what he wants to write. J. was reading all his lyrics like Andrew Dice Clay: "I never wanted to be say-ad! I wanted to be glay-ad! Why am I so cold if it's the month of May, eh?" You know how Dice used to do those limerics? It almost had the same poetic syncopation. But [the lyrics] are very sweet, very heartfelt.

LISA: It just shouldn't have been written down for people to experience melody-free. In the music, it comes together overwhelmingly. Love!

SARAH: [indecipherable] dumb, just thrown in there, [?] overly simplistic.

LISA: I have no problem with simplicity as long as it's false. I mean as long as there's something contradictory going on under it.

JESSICA: Yeah. There's some things, they're so sincere they can't be judged. They come from the heart and therefore they're sacred.

LISA: I felt downright uncomfortable. I felt scared of his great love. Because I thought, "What if that great love were staring me down? That confident love? I'd want to run away." And I thought of Yuka not only not running, but returning his love, and it was threatening. In a good way. It set me to contemplating.

JESSICA: When J. and I first fell in love,

we wanted to tell everyone. Everyone was like, "I don't want to know." It scares them, intimidates them, and pisses them off. We said this to Sean and he said, "Yeah 'cause they're fucking jealous." I don't know if it's entirely that. It's exclusionary, like, "We are a universe unto ourselves." It's like we've found that other half of ourselves and we don't need anything else.

SARAH: But it's fucking irritating--he's 22 years old.

LISA: That's the perfect time to be so idealistic.

SARAH: But doesn't it seem pompous to write this whole love album and just declare it and everything?

LISA: No.

JESSICA: No. His parents got attacked for the same thing. People didn't want to hear about how in love John and Yoko were.

LISA: People do not want to hear about true love. They want to hear about tragedy.

JESSICA: Yeah.

LISA: I wanna hear about tragedy! And degradation and bad destiny. My idea of love now, today--this'll probably change tomorrow--is you can never not be alone, but someone can wander into your dream, because they're having that dream too. And you can communicate within that alternate reality without translating too much, you know? And you just sigh with relief that you don't have to talk *so much* to say something.

JESSICA: The whole album *Double Fantasy* is about two people having the same vision. You can accomplish so much when one person believes in something, but when two people have the same fantasy, you can make anything happen. [But] it's a myth that puts a ton of pressure on relationships, that you're supposed to have that same dream your whole life and that other person is supposed to, too. I don't think there's just one person either. I think that's a romantic myth. There's more than one person, but there's not that many.

LISA: [joking] There's three.

JESSICA: [not joking] There's six. Maximum.

SARAH: I think it would be nice if there were just one though.

LISA: But what if there was just one and you didn't find him? Or if you found him and then he died. If there were six and he died, then you'd still have five chances.

JESSICA: Sean takes a ton of psychedelics.

SARAH: He was baked today.

## Video Reviews

by Wolfgang Carver

### Madonna: Ray of Light

It's hiccups. There's cats hanging from the walls. I smell with my ears. Cats in fans. I feel the sun go down.

### Rammstein: Du hast

The man says, "Who has me? Who has me?" The other one says, "Night." Night has him.

### Beastie Boys: Intergalactic

This is not boring. I'm not showing people my private penis because everyone would die! They would choke on the pee and be very mad.

### Frank Sinatra: That VH1 special on him when he died

That man is song.

### Sean Lennon: Home

This is not my show. I can't watch this again.

### Suckdog: Anatomically Correct

King Kong can't eat me. King Kong can't hold me in his hand. Only Mommy is real. Our plants are happy because they have music. They want to get out of their pots and dance. They want to make a mess. I will dance with them. I love plants because they are happy, though they miss flowers.

JESSICA: I've taken acid about 300 times.

SARAH: I've done it 200, 250 times.

LISA: You guys are nuts!

JESSICA: I thought, "I could really open those doors of perception." So I opened them. And I understood the inner workings of the universe. I really did. It's a lo-o-ong story, the workings of the universe.

LISA: I would think it should be very simple.

JESSICA: No, no, no--it's very simple--but to verbalize it takes a while.

LISA: Say it in one sentence.

JESSICA: I saw the infinity symbol, and that's it--that's how it works. The entire universe moves on it. Rhythms are all identical. Primitivism has been synthesized. The yin-yang symbol, which has always meant to me some pseudo-hippie fratboy with a chain, is actually so true, you know--that's what it's all about. The yin and the yang. If I was only on the level of comprehension I was on when I





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realized that, I would be unable to function here in this Chinese restaurant. But I knew it was the truth then, I know it was the truth now. I saw it. I wasn't afraid of anything for weeks. I wasn't afraid of death.

Death doesn't mean anything. I almost felt guilt about that, because you care about people to a certain extent, but after that certain extent there's just you. And you're alone. Your connection with another person can only go so far. It's not that you don't care, it's that there's this space where you're not connected. I was talking about how cinema affects emotive centers in people's heads and how audiences have become more sophisticated, and that's why when you see a film from the 1940s the emotions are so blatant. Jean Luc Goddard is trying to poke the emotive centers of a super-sophisticated audience, like a future audience. The guy I was talking to about all this, there was this 12-pack of Bud on the ground next to us, and I just talked and talked--I had that speedy thing going. We stood in one place, I thought. And after four hours, I finally came back into my head, back into my body, and I looked around and we were 30 feet away from the 12-pack of Bud. Neither of us remembered moving, but what we figured out it was I would get so intense in his face he would back up a step. It was four hours of my force pushing him back incrementally. It was really cool, because it was this guy I'd

really liked but had never really, really talked to before. And he died two months later, so I was really thankful that night had happened.

LISA: Drugs can do really good things to relationships. They don't often get credit for that.

JESSICA: Yeah. J. and I took E together, that was like heaven.

SARAH: I took this weird drug, an analog of ecstasy. I was expecting to be, "Aah, love" but instead I was extremely uncomfortable and my face was really hot. Everyone else who had taken it felt the same way, and all we could talk about was how hot our faces were.

LISA: How long did you talk about how hot your faces were?

SARAH: Like eight hours. [Laughter] We were all just lying in a bed--seven people lying in a feather bed, complaining. My friend was looking on the computer to try to figure out what we had ingested.

LISA: Was the rest of you hot?

SARAH: No. Just our faces.

JESSICA: Maybe the drug tapped into the center that makes you blush.

SARAH: We were saying, "It's like hot peppers! It's like hot peppers!"

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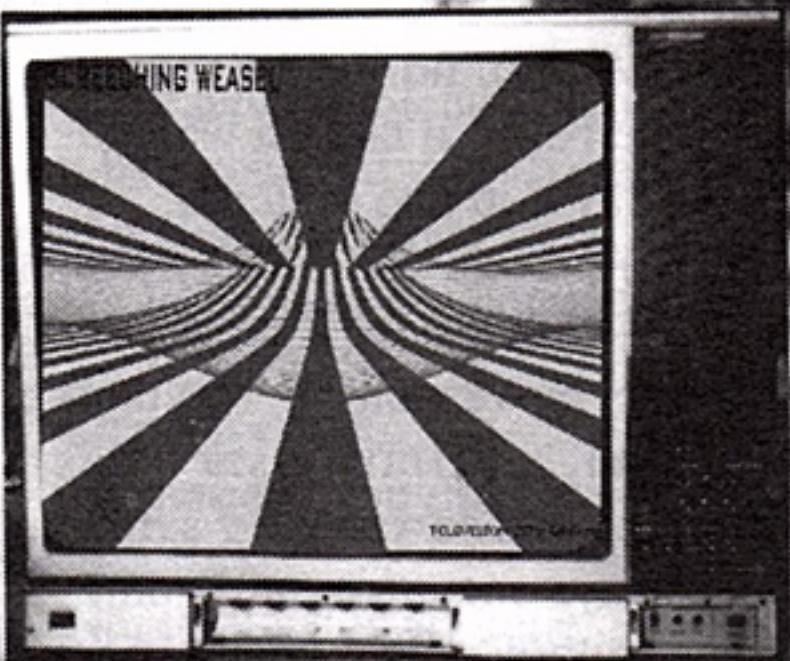
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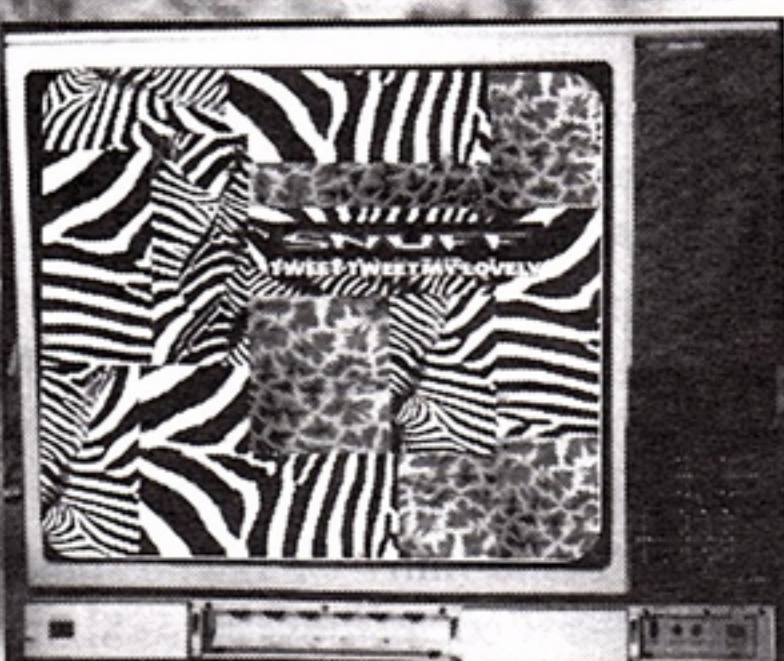
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# Hexum

I was in New York waiting to meet my interview subject. I had no idea what he looked like or exactly when he'd come. I was given only the location (Starbucks). When he arrived--very busy-looking--I carted him off to Holiday, where I didn't tell him my friends Jerry, Kate, Bambi, TR and Falcon were waiting, having started the day off with Screwdrivers for breakfast. Two days later, we'd all gone our separate ways--Jerry was coughing blood, TR was teaching at B.U., Kate won a Biker Slut of the Year contest, Bambi got a job on a Paramount movie, and I'd taken up jogging again. As for Eric's activities, who could know?

LISA: I was expecting you to be spectacularly ugly. Because there's no photos of you anywhere and your publicist wouldn't tell me what you look like. So when this black, old, sweaty transsexual showed up, I was hoping it was you. But it wasn't.

ERIC HEXUM: I thank you for respecting the no photographs rule, and not bringing a camera.

LISA: You're just an "E." on the book. I didn't even know your name was Eric until today. How come you're so, you know, discreet?

ERIC: The book's more important than me.

LISA: That's an unusual attitude. Is this recorder making you nervous? Here, put it in your breast pocket, you won't even remember it's there.

ERIC: I usually say no to these, but for some reason with you....

LISA: What, you would trust me to quote you correctly from memory? I have no memory.

ERIC: Uh, I'd just rather people concentrate on the book rather than myself. It's just not important.

LISA: You're not important.

ERIC: Nope.

LISA: Well, I have an inflated sense of self-importance, so we should even each other out.

ERIC: I was just told by [publicist] Christian to meet you and talk to you. I mean, you seem like a nice enough lady, right?

LISA: You think so already?

ERIC: Why not?

LISA: You give me a half-hour, then tell me how nice I am.

ERIC: At least you give some good vibes, I'll tell you that much.

LISA: You feel good?

ERIC: Yeah, why not? Good vibrations, dynamic marches, that's what it's all about.

LISA: Will you give me a tape of your band?

ERIC: Of Dynamic Marches? Hmm. It's a possibility.

LISA: Are you an existentialist?

ERIC: Nope. Nothing like that. There's no philosophies surrounding dynamic marches, the concept. It's kind of its own concept.

LISA: There's a lot of disgust.

ERIC: OK. Talk about it.

LISA: Why aren't you ashamed of this disgusting stuff enough to not write about it?

ERIC: Could you rephrase that?

LISA: No, I thought that was brilliantly put.

ERIC: OK. To tell you the truth, the reason is it's kind of entertaining. It's inspirational. It really is. You take these scenes, you look at them, you make sure you don't do them.

LISA: Oh really? So you don't think you're disgusting?

ERIC: Oh, I'm just a reporter.

LISA: You see this stuff, you don't live it.

ERIC: Well, I make some of it up. But, yeah, I just say it. There's no real talent in doing it. You hear stories, look at things, make some stuff up, and write it down.

LISA: I have to check to make sure this recorder is working. I know it makes people uncomfortable to hear their own voice replayed--sorry.

ERIC: It's OK. I trust you.

LISA: You do? Already? You're a fool.

ERIC: Well, I mean, uh, if Christian said you're OK, I guess you're OK. How do you know him?

LISA: I don't know him! I didn't even know his name was Christian! Don't trust me, Eric. I'm a shark. I sniff around for blood. Look at my fangs.

ERIC: Let me see. Very nice, very nice. So, back to *Dynamic Marches* and not me. What do you want to know?

LISA: If you were an animal, which one would you be?

ERIC: I'm sorry, I can't answer any questions like that.

LISA: If your *Dynamic Marches* were an animal, which one would they be?

ERIC: Aw, man, how can I be so nice? You know, this is the fifth interview I've

done today.

LISA: Your fifth one? Are you famous?

ERIC: No way. You know, with the others I put up a front and I lost it with you. OK, which animal. I'll answer you. No, I changed my mind. I'll get in trouble if I answer you.

LISA: You wouldn't answer the other four and now you won't answer me either. I'm nothing special, that's what you're trying to say to me.

ERIC: Oh, come on.

LISA: I'm nothing special to you.

ERIC: Do you want to go here [a cafe]?

LISA: No! You're Holiday-bound, young man.

ERIC: OK. So, do you have specific questions about *Dynamic Marches*?

LISA: You're just taking control. You're wrestling control out of my journalistic hands.

ERIC: Lisa from *Rollerderby*, I am.

LISA: Oh, and you're looking at your watch! That's psyching me out even more.

ERIC: Oh, don't worry--you're the last interview for today. But don't abuse that.

LISA: Your social graces...I don't know. [Sadly:] I don't know about your social graces, Eric. Freud says anti-social behavior is asking for it. When we do gross, unpopular stuff it's a fuck-you to society, and society must fight back. So the runts of society, the people who don't fit in--it's not that they make mistakes and are victims of abuse so much as they're asking for something specific and then getting it. The characters in your book are actually asking exactly for every horrible thing that happens to them.

ERIC: OK. That's true. But someone could turn that around and...I don't know. Maybe. I'm not sure. Next question.

LISA: Is this how you answer other journalists?

ERIC: Um, it depends where they're from.

LISA: I'm from New Hampshire.

ERIC: My other interviews today were all foreign. Next question.

LISA: Here we are at Holiday. There's a ton of people here.

ERIC: Uh...who? Any reporters?

LISA: No, they're not political. OK, you sit here [at the next table]. This is Kate.

KATE: Hi!!!

ERIC: Uh, hi.

LISA: And this is Bambi, TR, and this one here is Falcon. He's from Atlanta,



Georgia.  
FALCON: Athens.  
LISA: One of those places. He's one of those people from *down there*, Eric.  
FALCON: Would you like a vitamin?  
ERIC: No thanks, I'm trying to cut back.  
LISA: And this one is Jerry Wick. [*Jerry swoops me into a dance*]  
FALCON: You should cut back on your water, Eric. [*Eric has been sipping bottled Evian.*]  
LISA [*yelling from the dance floor*]: Can I buy you a drink?  
ERIC: No. Are you ready to start this?  
LISA: It is started. This is the New Hampshire way we do it. [*Sitting down:*] So why is your press release all about a photo of a couple dead girls, and not about your book?  
ERIC: OK, it's a little cheap. I mean, it really happened, so what's the big deal? Don't blame me. I didn't do it. But I can't talk about "We Shimmer" [the title of the photo]. I'm under court order not to. I never lied. It says in the press release I lied. That photograph [two girls on their way to the prom, one fat, one skinny--both ugly] inspired me. I could stare at this all day. Oh, God, gorgeous.  
JERRY: What do you think of Kierkegaard?  
ERIC: Nothing.  
JERRY: What are you?  
ERIC: Nothing.  
JERRY: You're just a reporter?  
LISA: That's what he said earlier. He's a reporter.  
JERRY: A reporter of what?  
ERIC: Of dynamic marches, vibrations and frequencies.  
JERRY: *Dynamic Marches*? Did you write that book? My friend was reading that book last night. It's fucked-up stories. Are you kidding? Why are you so dark? You don't seem dark at all.  
LISA: Yes he does.  
JERRY: He wishes to impose darkness.  
LISA: No. He can't help it. He's not even aware of it.  
ERIC: I think it's really important to separate myself from the book. Any question that you ask about me is gonna be shielded off. Sorry.  
LISA: Don't apologize. I'm not asking about you anymore. I'm telling you about you now.  
JERRY: He's mocking. He's mocking his characters and he's mocking in real life.  
LISA: He's not mocking.  
ERIC: To be honest with you, have you

read the book?  
JERRY: No, I'm just trying to upset you.  
ERIC: It's not gonna work.  
LISA: OK, we'll talk about *Dynamic Marches*. It's a disgusting little book about fat, lonely, isolated, compulsive, socially wrong people and the skinny, cruel, socially right people they're thrown together with under uncomfortable circumstances. I've always thought I was a very empathetic person--I thought I understood the people who don't fit in. After I read your book, because of the repulsion I felt for the characters, I no longer believe myself to be so empathetic.  
ERIC: Some people live cookie cutter lives even in their nonsocial activities. Those stories aren't to repulse or shock anyone. It's just for--I wouldn't say entertainment value, but um, you know, inspiration. I think you were inspired by it--to not be like those people.  
LISA: I wasn't inspired to not be like those people. It was that I realized I had no sympathy for those people. I thought there was no one I wouldn't have some sort of pity for. Now I realize I'm not very forgiving. Is that inspirational?  
ERIC: You can turn any negative vibes into inspiration.  
LISA: Does your book champion the underdog?  
ERIC: Nah. Personally, I never found a character in the book I could relate to, or even cared about.  
TR JOHNSON: How could you write about them then?  
ERIC: Isn't that sick? [*laughs*]  
TR: I think you're fibbing, Mister.  
ERIC: I did the whole thing on purpose. It wasn't an accident. My motives were sincere.  
LISA: How important do you think your book is?  
ERIC: It should be very, very low on people's list of priorities. It should go: cleaning the fish tank, *National Enquirer* below that, and *Dynamic Marches* on the bottom.  
LISA: How can you say it's below *National Enquirer*? What you did is art.  
ERIC: I kind of love the *National Enquirer* sometimes.  
LISA: I love the *National Enquirer* all the time. But communication and revelation are what make us most alive, and that's what your book gives.  
ERIC: You can immerse yourself in art, but you have to live in the real world. You take pieces of art and relate it, but you can't be living your life in some other

character. You got to be real.  
LISA: Art is real.  
JERRY: My friend said this is the scariest thing he ever read in his life, the darkest.  
LISA: TR has been dying to ask a question.  
ERIC: I only have ten or 15 minutes.  
LISA: TR, ask the question.  
TR: Where the fuck you gotta go, boy?  
ERIC: I have another appointment.  
LISA: TR, you are banned from the table.  
ERIC: No, I understand.  
LISA: I do not! TR, back to the other table with you.  
ERIC: This is the time I have scheduled for you. I'm not putting any importance on anything over anything.  
TR: What kinds of reading and writings did this text grow out of?  
LISA: Aw, TR, that question is even more offensive than your last one. Eric, how much pity is involved in this book?  
ERIC: Pity? That's a good one.  
TR: Do you believe that pity is a--  
LISA: Shhhhhh!  
ERIC: You don't have to pity the main characters. You could pity a minor character. There was not a lot I liked in these people. Let me look through it....  
JERRY: You're moving too slow with this.  
ERIC [*puts the book down*]: Eh, pity all of them.  
LISA: How much rage?  
ERIC: There shouldn't be any rage. That's a very negative vibe.  
LISA: There was plenty of rage in there. The helplessness was overwhelming. The characters were driven. They were helpless against the things driving them. In your book there's the unhealthy runt, and then the rest of the litter attacks. Do you think that's a good thing?  
ERIC: That's a relative question. Can you be more specific? I'm certainly against anything organized.  
LISA: It's not organized, it's instinctual. That rich girl who was after marijuana, and squished the fat girl into the back seat so she, the rich girl, had room to stretch her legs out, and then forced her to go to the bank machine and stole her money--  
ERIC: Wasn't that hysterical?  
LISA: No. It was horrifying. But that mean rich girl was just driven. It wasn't organized.  
ERIC: Some people are born with bad vibes and they're naturally evil.  
LISA: Do you blame her?  
ERIC: I don't know. At this point in my



life, I honestly don't know if I blame her for the way she is. She's being true to herself, right, and what's wrong with that? Ask me in five or ten years, maybe I'll have an answer then. I don't have one now. But at least it's important to document it. It's cool you're getting a lot of this stuff. Most people don't. It's not for everyone. It's not gonna be on *Oprah*. It's for a certain kind of individual--one who wants some inspiration.

JERRY: What's your appointment? Where do you have to go?

ERIC: A couple more questions and then I have to go.

JERRY: That's my question: Where are you going?

ERIC: I'm not gonna answer that one.

LISA: Jerry, go dance with Kate!

JERRY: Why won't you tell me where you're going? That's my second question.

TR: He's going to get a pedicure. How do you feel about this whole experience?

ERIC: It's positive. It's who I am.

JERRY: I want to know who you are, and I'll know if I know where you're going.

ERIC: I have to go. It was nice to meet you, Lisa.

LISA: You also. I'll walk you to the door.

JERRY: Your book is great!

ERIC: Thank you.

JERRY: To poop on!

LISA: Jerry! [*shouting at Eric's fleeing form*:] I was affected by your book! You're the only living writer I ever felt like interviewing!

ERIC [*from halfway down the block*]: Thank you!

LISA [*returning to the table*]: Jerry Wick, you're drunk. Move over.

JERRY: I'm not wrong. That guy--that guy's wrong.

LISA: I said you're drunk.

JERRY: I'm drunk? Well, duh!

FALCON: "My name is Eric. I'm going somewhere, but I can't tell you where!"

JERRY: "My name is Lisa. I'm gonna keep recording everybody. I'm so inventive!"

LISA: You're really treating me right. You're really treating me like a man should treat a woman.

TR: Lisa, slap his face.

JERRY: Ow! That hurt!

LISA: That hurt me too. I never had to slap you before.

KATE: You turning on the

magic again, Jerry?

JERRY: Yeah. Lisa likes this: Hey baby, you wanna go in the men's bathroom? You know what happens in the men's bathroom? There's dildos all over the walls. I don't even have to do anything. That's what the men's bathroom is--just dildos all over the place.

TR: I must've missed them.

JERRY: Open your fucking ears, motherfucker.

FALCON: Open your ass.

KATE: And feel the magic of the men's bathroom.

JERRY: Smell it, feel it.

KATE: I'm Jerry: "Dildos! Everywhere!"

JERRY: That existentialist motherfucker stole my cigarettes. Asshole!

BAMBI: Your cigarettes are right there, Jerry.

JERRY: I liked his book, though.

LISA: So what did the blondes think of the writer?

KATE AND BAMBI: He looked very much like Ted Gottfried!!!

KATE: I'm going to get together a slide presentation of Bambi's ex-boyfriends.

BAMBI: I did not go out with him! I did not!

JERRY: Did you suck his slimy tooth?

BAMBI: I did not! I...did...not!

KATE: Huh, huh, huh! Agh, you just made me drool. Huh, huh, huh! I'm Ted: "I'll have a pizza with no sauce!"

BAMBI: Ted is not gonna be included in the slide show!

LISA: He has to be. His matching summer shorts outfits must be in the gallery.

BAMBI: Well, he does round out the set.

LISA: The cop and the cop killer and Idiot Larry.... My favorite will always be Lizard Daddy.



Unlike Eric, Bomb 20 has no objection to his photo being taken.

TR: Do you two ever give butterfly kisses? [*Kate and Bambi demonstrate*.]

JERRY: I'm TR: "Want me to unzip my pants?"

BAMBI: I will buy a round for everyone! [*Everyone claps, hoots and chants Baber*.]

LISA: Bambi's my hero.

JERRY: You buy, I'll fly. What does everyone want?

KATE: Drink

Miller, it's the champagne of beer!

BAMBI: Oh no, Jerry's trying to count how many people are at this table.

LISA: So Falcon, what did you think of the writer?

FALCON: He's sort of dorky.

LISA: Well, he's totally dorky. Dork Central. But beyond that.... His protagonists are not the cool underdogs who win in the end--they're the grody underdogs that no one can stand, including the reader. He's neat to write like that. He's daring.

FALCON: I thought it was funny that he wouldn't tell us where he was going, so I followed him--he went to Taco Bell and ordered two Gordidas. [*laughter*] He did!

KATE: I'm Eric: "I can't answer that question."

BAMBI: I thought he was a piece of lint. Oh my god, look at Jerry.

LISA: What is that for? You buy a round for everybody and he moons you. I mean, is that your reward? The view of Jerry's hindquarters? Is that a positive thing?

KATE: That was really something I didn't need to see.

LISA: Can you believe I actually adore that person? I mean, even when he's like this?

KATE AND BAMBI: Yes.

FALCON: If you looked quickly, you would've noticed that he rolled up the 20-dollar bill and shoved it in his ass--it's his little trick--and then it comes out his mouth.

LISA: That means he loves you, Baber. That's Columbus-speak for "Thank you for the round and I love you: therefore, I give you my ass."

KATE: This is unbelievable service, the bartender bringing drinks to the table! Usually it's, "Vodka and cranberry? Bah! Faggot!"

BAMBI: He didn't trust Jerry with a trayfull of glasses. Did you tip him, Jerry?

LISA: Yeah--he showed his ass to him.

BAMBI: The bartender said to us last time we were here, "I know your life. You girls have to work. You have to pay the rent."

KATE: "I know your life." Thank you, Baber. Let's have a drink to Baber.

JERRY: Who's Baber?

LISA: They're both Baber. I'm an Honorary Baber.

BAMBI: You sure are. You're the first Honorary Baber ever.

LISA: The very first one? My cockles are warmed.

BAMBI: Look--this is how we felt before we met Lisa. [*Kate and Bambi take out a*



*sad, little heart.*] Then we met Lisa... [*The sad little hearts turn into doves and glitter flying up out of their hands.*]

JERRY: Ver-r-ry nice! [*Bambi shows Jerry a picture of her ex-boyfriend Lizard Daddy. He is genuinely shocked.*] Oh my god! [*Jerry is silent and dazed.*]

KATE: Did you guys see Tommy Stinson sitting next to us at Dojo's this morning?

LISA: No, I missed him. Why didn't you point him out?

FALCON: Didn't he die from booze?

KATE: No, that was the older Stinson. Bob Stinson.

TR: Well, he would've died from booze if heroin hadn't killed him first.

LISA: You're thinking of Bart Stinson.

KATE: The yellow Stinson brother?

LISA: Right.

JERRY: Bob Stinson was a beautiful man. I loved him. After Bob's death, everyone is afraid of rock-n-roll. I'm not even kidding now.

KATE: You are so pontificating now.

JERRY: Shut the fuck up, Kate.

KATE: It's a fact. [*Big, drunk voice:*] "After Bob's death, people feared rock-n-roll."

JERRY: Minneapolis is the second-biggest relocation center ever! Bob was the man. Everyone's so fucking lame now.

KATE: Who's that a photo of?

LISA: Bomb 20.

BAMBI: He's very immature sexually.

LISA: He's only 19. He might be very mature for 19.

JERRY: He's like some fat kid who sits in his room and thinks he makes music. And he can't rock, I'll tell you that much.

LISA: What's with all the "rock" today, Columbus boy? I don't know, if Bomb 20 propositioned me, I might have a hard time turning him down. Would you take him home?

BAMBI: Naw, he'd leave too much makeup on my pillow.

KATE: And the next day he'd want you to re-put it on him. [*Bambi is a makeup artist.*]

BAMBI: He's too pretty.

LISA: He's serious.

JERRY: What's he serious about?

LISA: He wants to fuck the system!

JERRY: He's in Chumbawamba?

KATE: Yes, he's a 45-year-old squatter--huh, huh, huh!--who's not gonna put up with it anymore. Huh, huh, huh!

LISA: Jerry! Don't burn it! That photo is a business product of mine!

LISA: Where did you go?

JERRY: I went to go get saved.

LISA: By whom? Did you get your palm read?

JERRY: I went to get peace of mind.

LISA: Is this your way of saying you went to buy cigarettes?

JERRY: Nope.

LISA: What did you do?

JERRY: Um, I talked to people I didn't know.

LISA: Who did you talk to?

JERRY: I don't know. It was nice though. People I know, I can't get as much out of. I went across the street to talk to people I didn't know.

LISA: To get saved.

JERRY: To get saved. I was losing my mind.

LISA: Why?

JERRY: Because I started getting too comfortable.

LISA: It made you uncomfortable that you were comfortable?

JERRY: Yeah.

LISA: It didn't feel right?

JERRY: I didn't feel right.

LISA: That's why I went to that AA meeting across the street for a few minutes when we were at Dojo's. I wanted people very different from me. I thought maybe there would be an intersection resulting in conflict or confusion, but there wasn't. So I came back. Does confusion feels like peace to you? Does chaos feels like peace?

JERRY: Chaos feels like peace. Peace doesn't feel like peace to me. It's unnerving.

LISA: Yeah, me too. That's why I like you so much.

JERRY: Thank you.

LISA: Your disorder makes me calm.

JERRY: I wanted to talk to other people to separate myself from--

LISA: --what you were becoming?

JERRY: It had nothing to do with me, no. It had everything to do with...an envelope. I felt like someone was sealing it and deliver-ing it. And um, I wanted to stop the licker. The liquor. [*laughs*] The licker of the envelope. And uh, I wanted them to, uh, stop it. I wanted to break that seal. I was getting sealed in and I could feel it happening. I didn't like it. That's why I flipped you guys off.

LISA: You fucked us all.

JERRY: No, I saved. I saved, uh, any kind of thought I had left. I can't talk like this anymore. Kate, what are you doing?

KATE: Sitting here.

JERRY: What's this beer taste like?

LISA: Watch out, Kate.

JERRY: I just wanted to see what her beer tastes like.

LISA: I've seen your little sips before.

JERRY: She's the kind of girl that if I drank too much of her beer she'd beat me up.

KATE: Don't fuck with my food, don't drink my booze, and don't wake me up when I'm sleeping.

FALCON: I don't want to leave.

TR: Philadelphia's nowhere.

BAMBI: Stay here.

FALCON: I'll be your little pet.

JERRY: It only takes half-an-hour to get from New York to Philadelphia.

TR: Cancel that gig. You played so hard last night, it counts for the show tonight too.

JERRY: I'll tell you what, if you can pull these teeth out of my mouth [the two that stick straight out], I'll stay.

LISA: Use your lighter, TR. Burn that tooth out.

JERRY: Hey, Lisa, why is it that everything Kate's talking about I want to know about?

LISA: Why don't you just find out? What are you talking about, Kate?

KATE: We're talking about my friend Ricky, who has a utility belt with things hanging off it.

JERRY: Oh.

KATE: I was telling her I wish I had that utility belt right now.

JERRY: You make up stuff, don't you?

LISA: Kate never lies.

KATE: I don't have to.

LISA: What would you do with that utility belt if you had it right now?

KATE: Use pliers to pull Jerry's teeth out.

JERRY: Oh, uh, I was getting confused how it related.

KATE: Do Blaine again!

JERRY [*rubbing his nose with his palm like Blaine from Nashville Pussy, and in a gruff voice*]: "Agh, you guys, you guys are all right, but, I mean, do you like rock-n-roll or not? Jesus Christ, man, you keep talking about that fucking Hanson booolshit!"

FALCON [*rubbing his nose and using the same voice*]: "You, agh, like that crap?"

JERRY: "Oh, god, Superchunk, you like, agh, that?" [*Regular Jerry voice:*] Yes. "Ah, man, I, I don't go past '73."

KATE: Huh, huh, huh! "Standing in the road with my dick in my hands. Telling all the kids I'm the ice cream man!"

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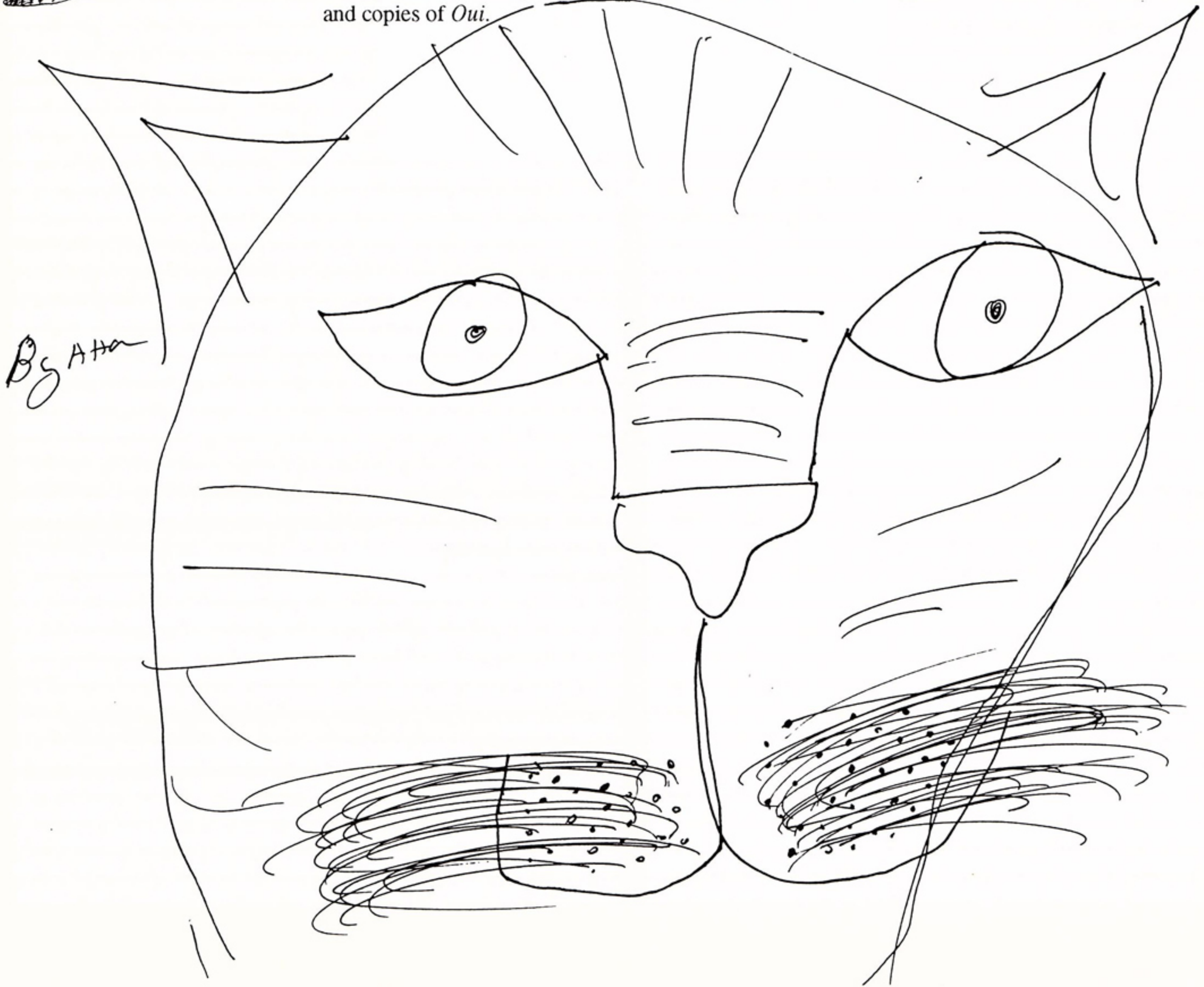
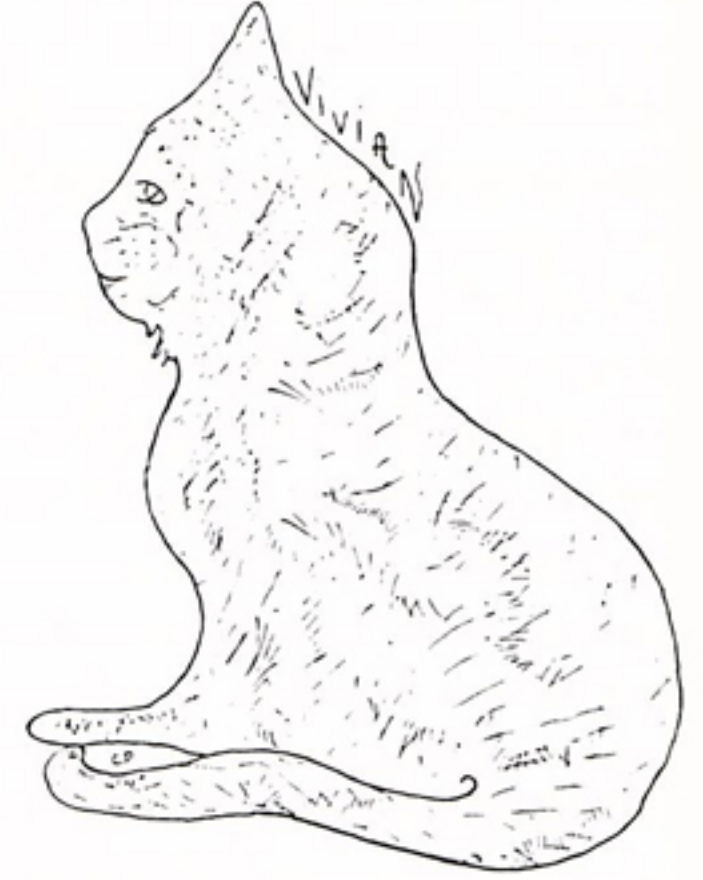


# Unhygienic Sadists And Other Friends

story and small illustrations by Catherine Phillips (large cat by A. Finn)

"Animals are beneath humans," said my mother, "and cats in particular are snotty, destructive, unhygienic sadists better left to killing rats in barns and appearing in poems." When I was an adult, she said, I could get a cat or fulfil any other dastardly dreams. So I did. Her name was Vivian. Soon after I got her, my dad died and my boyfriend and I broke up. He moved out with all the furniture. Vivian was a great comfort, curling up beside me on a borrowed mattress as I contemplated the realization that I'd never written a bonafide love song.

While I holed up, Vivian hung out on the fire escapes facing the back courtyard with the neighborhood cats. She'd knock with her claws on various door in the building, get let in (or not), hang around, then leave. When she wanted to come home, she glared into my bedroom window, sending telepathic signals until I'd lean over and check to see her glowing eyes, and open the door. According to my sources, she even knew people on the third floor; I knew no one on the third floor. I hope Vivian never got into Myron's. He lived across the hall, and was violent and slovenly. The smell coming from under his door was of great interest to her, and when he moved out, she came in with me to sniff around, but *didn't stay long*. The abandoned dishes might have been cleaned by a nuclear explosion, and the floor was completely covered in mostly trashed belongings, including Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and copies of *Oui*.







by Lisa Crystal Carver

### The Population Of Dreams

John Forbes Nash, Jr., was a mathematical genius who suffered from schizophrenia for 30 years and then woke up and won the Nobel Peace Prize. He wrote that "rationality limits a person's concept of his relationship to the cosmos" and called the times he was cured "interludes of enforced rationality." A visiting professor yelled at him in the insane asylum, "How could you believe you are being recruited by aliens?" Nash said, "Because the ideas about supernatural beings came to me the same way that my mathematical ideas did. So I took them seriously." Of course there is a connection between mathematicians and mystic religious fanatics, what with their complex alternate reality that might very well be true, just with different symbols. Nash's biographer, Sylvia Nasar, and/or a psychiatrist (can't remember which) called him an extreme example of how people whose intelligence greatly exceeds their emotional sophistication drown in creativity and research, because that satisfies the simultaneous needs for solitude and companionship.

### The Only Child

The only child, surrounded by adults who are never his equals, feels like an alien on a mission to study humans--including the one whose body he's inhabiting. The only child is always *realizing*. There are many ways of knowing. The only child does not have the natural way, the way that's throughout his whole body and is consistent in various social situations. The only child seeks out difficult people to love, because being devastated works for him. Confidence to him is coagulation. He needs his confidence destroyed, he needs to get unarranged enough to see the different parts of himself--most of which are, under normal circumstances, eclipsed, possibly all lifetime long, by the higher functioning parts. Other people might think it's a good idea to just let the higher functioning parts keep control, and live, but the only child would rather realize things. I don't recommend becoming involved with him--he's never satisfied; he's only realizing. And trying to get away from you so he can dream about you. (I'm not talking bad about someone else--I'm an only child.)

### A Guide to Bereavement by the American Cancer Society

You can imagine the platitudes and reassurances enshrined herein! I think I could write a better guide. "You're going to hate the person. You're going to be pissed off at them for dying, and for taking so long to die. You're going to be pissed off at them for being in so much pain. They're going to shrink and pieces of them will fall off till they're very small and helpless, and every time you look at them you're going to think about when they were strong and big and you were small and helpless, and how they shook you and humiliated you then, even though you hadn't thought about that in years and years. You're going to be pissed off at them for dying exactly like they lived. You'll expect sudden realisticness, guidance and generosity to pop up out of nowhere

and flow sweetly from their lips, just because they're dying. But nothing's going to change, and you're going to be pissed off at them for making you see that dying is not so miraculous and powerful. You're going to feel absolutely guilty. You're going to neglect your duties and feel like a robot-monster."

I just found that written in my hand on the back of an envelope dated 25 July 1997. On 25 July 1997 I was not at my most humorous and lovable.

### Rich People Body

Rich people can do whatever they want. I knew this fashion designer who bleached her four-year-old daughter's hair to trick people into believing the mother a natural blonde. She put *chemicals* on a child's *head*--no one outside her insane income bracket would even consider such an act. Rich people's relationship with their body is one of master and servant--the rich person tells their body what to do, hires an army of surgeons,

masseuses and experts to enforce the rules, and the body does it. In scaring workouts, the instructor shows a scary movie then sets you on an exercise bike and yells at you. \$250 per hour. What happens to my poor person body is never scheduled. When I run, I feel like pieces of meat. I feel slaughterable, edible. I feel sinews, I hear bones clicking. I escape the tyranny of the brain. I run faster and faster, a haze of movement takes over where my body had been. I escape everyone, everything. I've entered the afterlife, my feet six inches above the floor of the earth and six seconds northeast of the tarry wave of time.

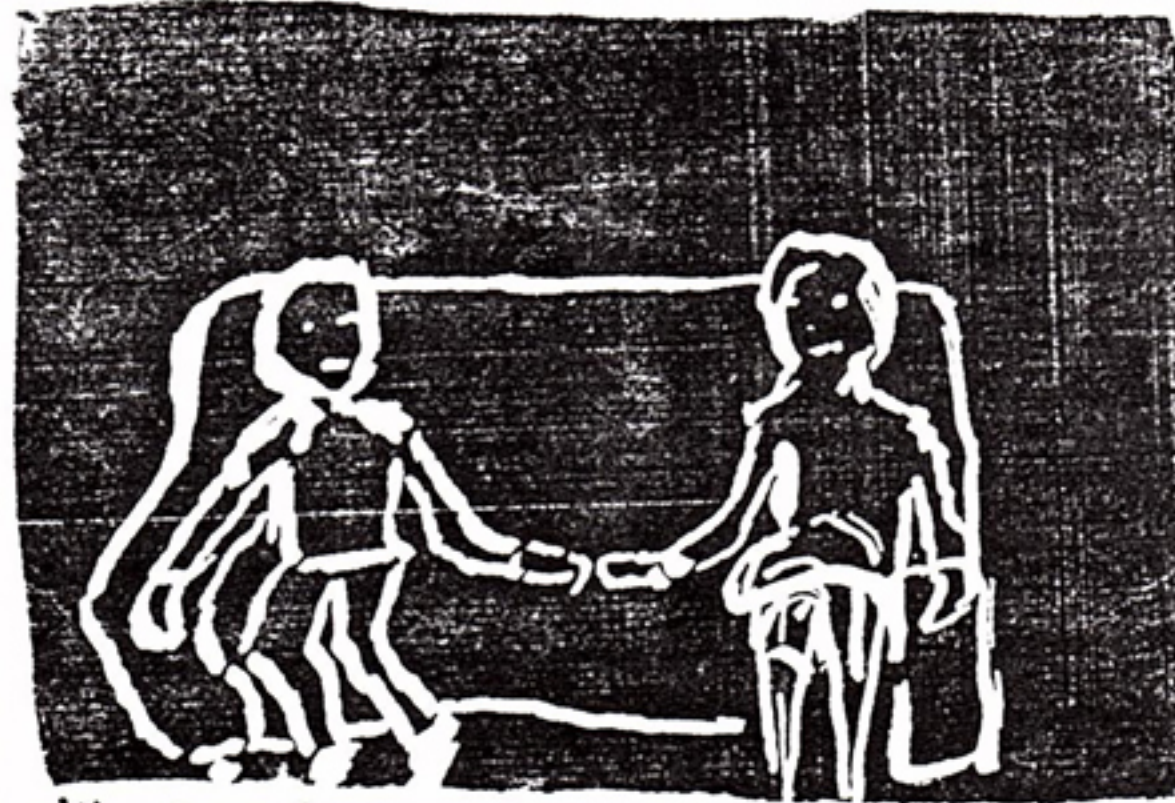


illustration by Bill Callahan a long time ago

### A Sweet Ugly Magnificent Floating Man

Allen Ginsberg was phenomenally ugly, and was made up of that ugly, New Jersey, enthusiastic voice; school-girlish crushes; and excessive, tumbling imagery...he was so filled with stuff to tell. He was naive, but that's OK--he was covering a very wide area; you can't be picayune when you're stretching out over all of time and land.

### It's Sweet To Realize You Don't Have To Have Something To Give It Away

I don't know what Layman P'ang means exactly, but that doesn't stop me from repeating it. "The stick doesn't hit a man who has nothing further to do!" I shouted that at Matt Jasper when I got tired of listening--and I think he reached enlightenment. Layman P'ang and Matt reached it. I'm just sitting here on the phone.

### Humanism

I'm just gonna say all this, whether it makes sense or not, even if it bores people to death. Here goes: Poems or lyrics run through our head like people say prayers even though they don't believe in God. (Cynthia.) All we need is tunnels. All that stuff is there. I'll try any tunnel. But for it to work, you have to believe in the tunnel as the thing. Even though it's not. When I'm almost



asleep, I'm halfway between the me I know and the me I don't, who has a logic and a life and a landscape all her own. I try to catch clues to bring back with me to conscious me, but when I do I can't make sense of them. Or maybe they burnt up when they touched the atmosphere, and what I hold is char, not the thing I had as dreaming me. Monsters are real if you just understand them. Some things are too marvelous to be perceived in their true form. They become symbols, and to not believe in the symbols is to understand only partially. Inside me are all these separate parts that don't know each other, and cannot exist in each others' atmospheres. Dreams within dreams within dreams within dreams...I'm in a whirlpool. How does one get out?

### **She Came To Live With Us**

She falls asleep before I do. I touch her body, some old, some new: the bird bones, cat muscles, snake jaw, wearing shadows like a black lace shawl. The metal plate in her pelvis makes her look a hundred years old at least. She'd never get past airport security so I tell her don't even think of trying to leave.

### **The Only Relationship That Has No Way To End**

I was kissing my son, and he threw his fist at the floor: "I throw your lovin' down!" I just stared at him, half hurt, half amused. Then he picked "something" up off the carpet and put it on my chest near my heart: "I put two lovin's back in."

### **On Having More Children**

What I love most about having a kid is the dynamic of our different ages. Wolfgang is opening up into life and soon I'll be on the shady side of death. Down the road, it'll be neat to have one person in the house just discovering hormones while the other is starting to break down. I always wanted more children. I have this ideal of having several different ages in the house, how we would all relate to each other as we simultaneously reach different points of life and our bodies and energies and interests. I see the conflicts and connections that would arise from that intersection as a much more real life than just me bouncing my ideas off the walls back into me, and arguing points with my intellectual friends that we all agree, basically, are worth arguing--which is totally different than trying to explain something to a ten-year-old, or understand how something unimportant to you could be so dire to him.

Last night I thought, for the first time, that maybe I won't have any more children, for exactly the same reasons I condemned my peers for not having any: I am selfish, value ideas above all else (maybe), and I just don't feel like dealing with someone else's shit.

### **Three Things I Wrote While Drinking**

\*Love between a man and a woman is magical and hideous.

\*Marriage and children are a temptation, a separation from the knowingness in darkness. Buddha, Jesus, Steven Tyler, all of them were rascallions abandoning their families. I, too, feel the call--to chaos, to fire, to water, to abandon all that I know and have.

\*I believe in movement, three-dimensional senses.

### **A Letter From Wolfgang To His Godfather (dictated)**

Five and the nine. I'm nuts. And there's six and five and a two. And there's five and there's three and there's five and there's four. And let's read the whole map! That's New York City right up

there. No, that's New Hampshire! That's where we live. Do you know Grandpa's work? It's work where Grandpa lives. That's a nightmare I had last night. Those were mean dogs. And I had happy dogs in my good dreams. Mommy picked me up out of a bad dream. I love you Devon! I love you Devon! Hi Devon. I'm hiding a nightmare in the closet. I'm done with this letter.

### **Runaway**

How could I think I could know more without my son? All I would be is uninterrupted. Interruptions are the clash of other people's dreams with one's own. It makes sparks, and sparks are the best stuff. To stay in dreams all the way through is to drown. I think?

We were taking a walk and Wolfgang pointed at a white feather on the wind. It glided up and over, then back again, and down until his dirty little boy hand almost had it--then up, up, up until it disappeared into the whiteness of the sky. For the next few days, he called me "Feather Mommy." He's always calling me things that go up into the sky and disappear: Firecracker, Smoke. I know he knows I am somehow unattainable, and I regret it. He calls himself Satellite Dish Wolf. He is attached to this world, but receives transmissions from heaven? All kinds of people are mothers, even people who weren't meant to be. And they're just as much mothers as those who were meant for it. We really are where we are. In my dreams I fly away, but I'm right here dreaming. I'm holding your hand. I love you, and all your funny ways.

### **Going Out At Night**

In my hand, on my knee, glowing deep blue and dentist-white on a 17-year-old's lipstick red, my can of Budweiser is covered with tiny bumps of perspiration, like toad's flesh. A few beads gather together and drop onto my thigh, which is smooth like aluminum and perspiring too. I have an air conditioner now, but I prefer the heat. I put the can down and think of what to do with my hands. One goes on the back of my neck, the thumb of the other is under my shirt, the fingers are half-down my shorts. One perfect second, yawning, stretching. My son is at grandpa's tonight, all night long. I think I'm going out. Well all right.

The sun is hovering at the periphery of the landscape, which is a friendly, small town, very many trees, and a few satellite dishes, solitary and brave, glowing white against the green. The bank clock dial glows and so do the clouds--luminescent with the day's attempt to hold on to power even as it bends under the greater weight of the night. I cross the street to a police-horse, black and pretty; the cop says he's purebred and friendly. I pet him gently, holding my breath because I don't know if this would be considered public intoxication. I only had one beer, but I'm feeling wild. I'm scared the horse will bite me. I have a crush on the horse and the cop. I move on, exhaling madly.

I'm on my way to the river. The leaves are heavy, hitting my face as I pass them by. The sky is rising now to meet the night. A fat man with a backpack looks at my legs the same way the air touches cement. I slip down the wet grass hill on treadless sneakers. By the time I reach the bottom, it's dark.

Like a cat's eye, the river is black and reflecting light no one else can see. Earlier today I saw a decomposed squirrel. The fragile jaw bone with fierce front teeth had separated from the skull, pointing in the opposite direction. The river's light is like those teeth--shiny, hard and useless. Couples move over the brick



walkway holding hands over bony knees. Young and old jaws are moving--they're saying something no one else can hear. Like the river, they move back and forth, unable to find rest in the body of the night. These bony, strolling couples, reverent, normal, are not afraid of all the unlit things. Like me. The shadows are thin blankets overlapping, all different shades of dark. My lipstick glistens red like the sparkles on the crest of each wave. My body--soft, compliant--is lying on the craggy river rocks.

I travel back through a cold cement tunnel till I'm downtown again. Push through these dark doors where I know I'll find a TV and huddled couples and trios luminescent. One old man is talking to himself. I order a JD and coke and watch him frankly. The words he drops down on his pendulous gut from his drooping lip and hairy mouth, I know would be right if I listened. He is as much a part of the night as a star or the entire river or the blackness of the road.

Out of a corner comes someone I hadn't noticed. He's about 50 years old and resembles a fox terrier. He says do you want another drink? I say I'm out of money. He says I didn't ask that. He buys me a drink. Straightaway I learn he was a P.O.W. for two-and-a-half years. I ask him what he thought about all that time. He said, "Home. Just home." He touches my leg with broken knuckles--two or three times the normal size--and knife wounds as he tells the story. He calls the Vietnamese gooks, looks up quickly to see if I'm offended. I'm not. How would I know what racist assumptions mean when you're in a foreign prison camp? He led the men out of the camp during a three-day monsoon. Dug under the barbed wire fence with their hands. It was 22 days before Americans found them. They ate a wild pig and a dog. Had to carry the animals ten miles away to cook them so the enemy wouldn't see the smoke and recapture them. Now he's a cook at Jake's and his girlfriend broke up with him Tuesday. She's 32 or 24. Her husband is 71, and she has another boyfriend too. Out of 25 men who escaped, 19 survived. He'd moved out of his apartment to live with her, now she's tossed him out and it's \$89 a night to stay at Day's Inn. He's thinking about moving to Maryland--everyone at the chamber of commerce smiles and is friendly there. I promise to come eat at Jake's tomorrow morning, and leave.

I get home and *The Last Temptation Of Christ* is on. I yell things at my TV and feel deep.

I must've fallen asleep. The phone rings and it's Jerry, his sweet, crackly voice breaking my dream like a thumb poking through very old, worn fabric. I try to remember what I wanted to tell him. Something about how miracles are an abomination. Something about how I am of this world, and miracles mess up the flow of taking my turn to die eternally. (?) He says, "Metaphor, not miracles!" I say, "What the hell are you talking about?" He makes some comparison between the bible and *Soap Opera Digest*. He says nobility is lost today. He has the gall to claim he is the last noble man! I'm a sucker for gall. As I am for crooked teeth. He says he changed his mind about slowness. Now what was it he said originally on the subject? Neither of us remembers. Our story goes in and out like the tide. My night self's a sea-broken fence, breaking out of the sand and floating on top of deep waters till it reaches the horizon. I forget what we say that makes so much sense--maybe it never did. I go to sleep not like I'm losing awareness, but like I'm traveling to this sea that's always there. My everyday life is the one that seems lost now, seems like the dream. And every time I'm here again, over and

over and over again, the stars come out like they never didn't shine for me to navigate by. Me the floating, broken fence glowing white in the sparkling, flowing night.

It's almost dawn. While I've been thinking, we've been talking about his hallucination that I'm a Mason, right and left brain, all the one-night-stands we've ever had, resistance and whims, endlessness, and how he wants to move north and be on call to snowplow this winter, because he wants to be interrupted by nature. "Thirty feet of snow!" he says as if he discovered it. I say goodnight and go outside. The sweat under my clothes gathers into filaments clinging back to the night. Though the sky is still dark, the outline of every shape glows. I, too, glow. It's as if the earth and all the things on it have hidden the light from the night, and now it's beginning to peer out--from behind every bush, from under an abandoned red wagon and around every telephone pole, marking time.

In the night and in between the night and day are all sorts of lights that are not light. So too are there all these ways to know that are not knowing, that do not belong, that cannot find a home, haloed with an unreal, post-apocalypse aloneness. I can almost feel knowledge creeping across my limbs, like hairs rising when lightning is near. Except for maybe a few minutes, I haven't slept, but I don't feel lethargic at all. I feel like I could walk forever. Straight ahead is a wall of trees, magnificent in size, like a tidalwave. The wind is blowing every single leaf straight up--must be 100,000 of them. Their undersides are white. It's a wall of white, of wind-driven white. And it's not how I feel about him that lets me know how I feel about him--it's the way those leaves look to me now.

I hear falling in love makes you like a little kid, makes you feel four years old. When I was four, my father left my mother for another woman and her children and they moved across the country. My mother was in the hospital, they said she might not make it. I overheard the adults arguing about who I would live with. They lied to me. My cousins were watching my turtle; they forgot to feed him and he died. I had no brothers, no sisters, and no sense of direction. One day I went out my front door across the street to play at a friend's house. I walked out her back door, got lost and ended up in another section of town. A policeman found me.

I'm surprised to find I've walked all the way to the river again, and the sun bursts up, fully formed, like a balloon that had been held underwater by a child. This is the sun of people who do their day right. In the last 25 years, I've learned how to do my day right, and I laugh all the time. But just now I feel like I did when I was four. There's something magnificent in being lost and bewildered, something I've missed. It hurts my head as much as it would anyone, but at the same time it feels like peace. It's time to go back now, my son is coming home.

### Cat Power

Reports came back that my name crossed Chan Marshall's lips about a thousand times that summer night in Boston. Apparently she felt that it was because of me people made fun of her androgynous look (because I was all glittery and high-heeled that night?), and I guess she's pissed that we went out with the same guy (but I was with him five years before her, so what's to be mad about?), and so she refused to sleep at the house she was supposed to because I was gonna be there too. It was late at night, I don't know where her band slept instead.

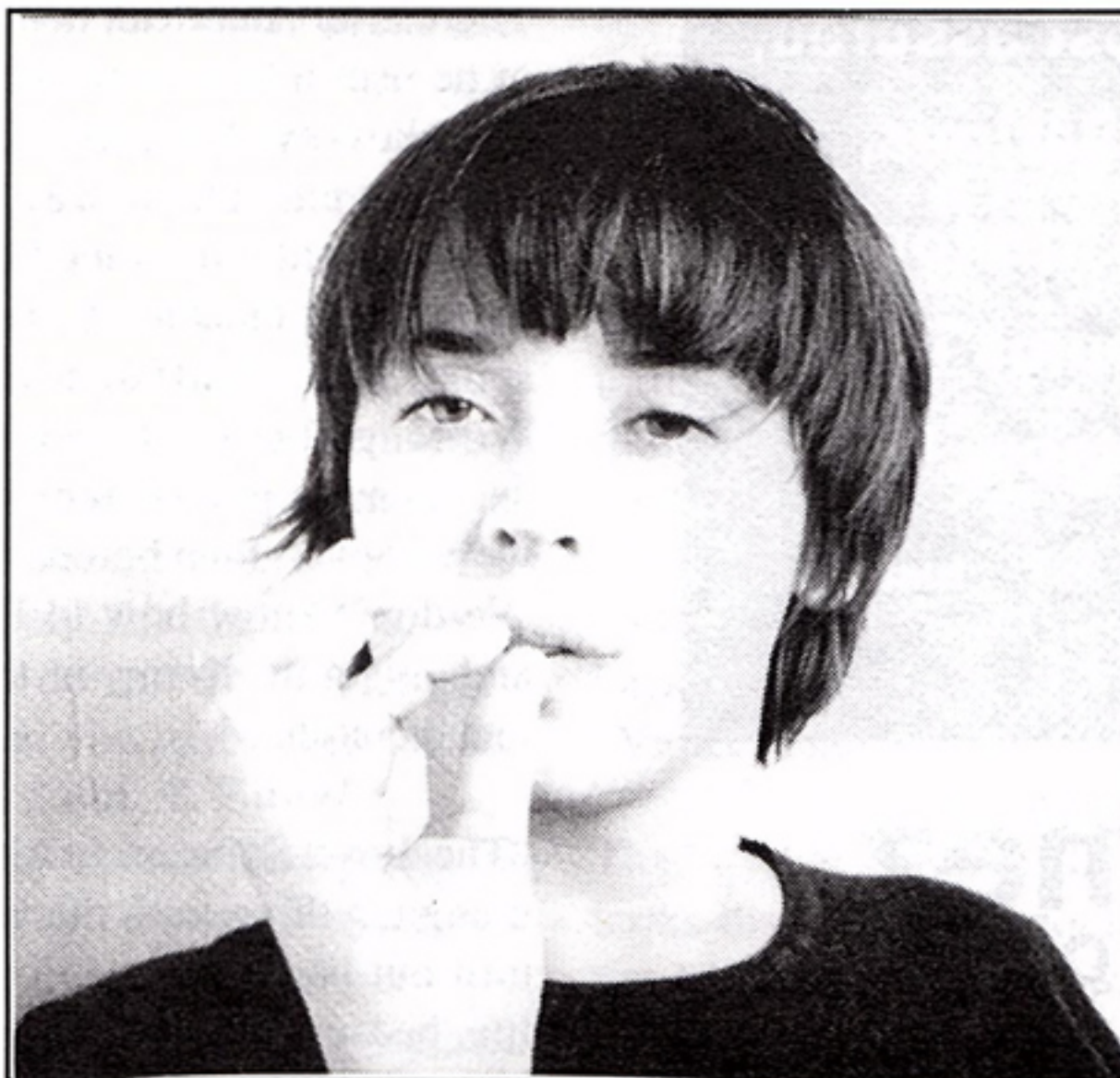


You'd think I'd be excited to be thrust into this silly non-cat fight with a celebrity, but it happens all the time and it's just boring. I am nice and I like to make friends. I thought she was perfect-looking. She looks like Thurston Moore or my son. Yeah, she looks exactly like a three-year-old boy. It's amazing. She also looks at ease in her unease. I'd heard she cries on-stage, moved by her own songs and frustrated by people talking. I was looking forward to it. Alas, it was just an annoying set. A song about a double confession. Actually, admitting to a double confession is a triple confession, and since two negatives cancel each other out, it ends up still being a confession. Those are the kind of games one tends to play when one's a WASP. Both complaining and confessing, done quickly, make for good songs. Dragged out, it's an insult to people who paid seven bucks to see you. She reminded me of Jandek, who I always thought I should appreciate, since everyone I respect respects him, but if it were the end of the world and there were no reason left to lie, I'd say I cannot stand that man. On CD, she's more like Joni Mitchell when she wanted to skate away, or maybe Neil Young at his most melodramatic, alcoholic, broken low. Her voice is like a summer breeze--barely there, melancholy, drifting away...undeniable and then just gone. An undulation moves through it, something very old. She's bored, attentive, disillusioned, remembering. The language is stilted and unexpected. The music is gentle. Trailing off. In interviews, she's charming. Very interested in the world. I think quirky is the word. She's all over the place. She's young like a space alien visiting.

In *The Hills Beyond*, Thomas Wolfe tells the story of the Joyners. Bear Joyner's 20 offspring split into two tribes: those who stayed in the hills and kept the same ways as everything around them deteriorated--the forests decimated, the soil eroded and scattered with trash, the people grown inbred and strange; and those who went to town, entered the world, and became prosperous, powerful, possessing senses of humor other people got. Those left behind had nothing to their name except for "something wild, world-lost, and lyrical: the sound of rock-bright waters, bird calls, and something swift and fleeting in a wood; cloud shadows passing on a hill; the wind through the hill grasses, and the quality of light--something world-lost, far, and haunting...." All this is in Chan Marshall's song. And I guess that's why I hated her live show. I don't like what is ancient and wild to come blinking out of its hole. It's bound to crumble up here. I know she--the woman--has traveled a lot and goes out with the men of indie rock and is lively, but the song somehow remained--though worn bare with age--pristine. I'm not ready for it to just poke its head out right there in The Middle East Cafe, amongst all those backpacked Bostonians and me and all my wiry-limbed gay friends in black, and silver-and-white dressed, boisterous straight friends. I'd rather never see it face to face, actually--ever. And I wonder at all those who think they do want to. Do they just not mind making unsafe the last thing remaining safe-kept and unknown?

## Secret Life

Whenever someone tells me they feel low about their place in life, and why, I think, "How could what you just described seem like a low place when there's so much wondrous stuff all around?" But then when I try to think of exactly what that wondrous stuff is, I can never come up with anything specific, because it's never what it seems. If a bird's song seems wonderful, it's because it's the messenger of some unknowable--what? I can't come up with the noun because I've never known it! But I see its messages and messengers everywhere. If I were to say this out loud to my suffering conversation partner, I would be sure to be annoying. If I'm thinking all this secret stuff all the time, other people must be too. What if they're thinking evil things about me with their secret thoughts? Surely they are. Nah--they're probably thinking about their drycleaning and love. Some things wondrous: the way the light always changes in the sky, and bitten apples turning brown and dried leaves crumpling to dust, and wind



Cat Powers

like razor blades, and the smell of hot tar, and the memory almost there of pioneers forging always on, some falling down and behind, but others go on. I think it's wonderful to be a human being. Not many people think so. At least not the people I like.

More than one person has said to me (I think it was two) they'd like to be solo astronauts because then there wouldn't be other people around to mess up the beauty they see, or their dreams (whichever way you look at it). My thought when they said that is, "God, I must be the most alone person on earth, because I already feel like a solo astronaut, and all I want is to come down, and I don't know how, and I don't think I ever will." What Royal Trux refer to as direct central-nervous-system to central-nervous-system communication--something they'd like to happen, but is impossible--is probably the same dream as someone knocking on my rocketship door and coming in. Lots of people talk about it in all different ways.

My friend David was just telling me he feels like a loser because he's 30 years old and he rides a bike (or would if he got the brakes fixed) and is between houses and the only shirt he has in the place he's at right now says STP (the oil company) and now everyone thinks he's a big Stone Temple Pilots fan. So I started complaining too--about how Wolfgang has a cold so he snorts and snuffles so loud it wakes me up all night, and my friend and her fellow have been having some differences in styles of loving, which make her cry and call me when I finally do get to sleep. So by now, I told him, I'm a little delusional and I kind of don't like it but it's actually extremely pleasureable, this careening in my stomach, and everything looking a little liquid around the edges. David said that's how he feels about his situation too. So he, too, was keeping his secret thoughts about wonderful stuff to himself, saying out loud only what he thinks will be comprehensible instead. What if people aren't knocking on each other's rocketship doors because they're all already open?

It's dangerous to think like that, though, because you



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that can lead to getting locked up in the looney bin! It snowballs. It's not healthy to be around a lot of people who encourage your eccentricities--I've seen people get really unlikable when that happens.

### **Fear**

There is an American belief that poetry is OK if the guy's a drunk or he uses a lot of exclamation points or dirty words (Bukowski, Mayakovsky, Whitman, Childish). "I am as lonely as the only eye/ of a man on his way to the blind!" This kind of person tries to possess life or a mood or the elements of the day or night--not by letting it inhabit us, or come to us from all directions and then spin off in all different directions again, like T.S. Eliot lets it. We're grabbing it. We're spearing everything we see with exclamation points. We want to make it ours. We'll do anything we've never done before. But we don't know how to do nothing. We don't know how to let it. The thing about ungente poetry and ungente living is that in the seizing, one can, oneself, remain unseized.

With T.S. Eliot, not a lot happened. In his best poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," he ended up not even doing anything with the woman, because he figured it would all turn out bad anyway. He didn't even tell her what he thinks of life, because what if she said, "But that wasn't what I was talking about!"? He hears mermaids calling to everyone, but they will not call to him, he thinks. (They are calling him, though--they are! Of course they are--how else would he know they're there?) In the end he has "lingered in the chambers of the sea/ By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown/ Till human voices wake us, and we drown." I thought he was strolling by cafes and on the beach with the lady, and thinking about the lady, and thinking about the mermaids out there. But no, he was in here with the mermaids, and what he thought was the dream--other people's dream, not his--was the real thing, and what he thought was real...I think that was real too. All the scenes and realities rolled by him and through him so gently, transforming without announcement. He let each one go without question, and it didn't occur to him that he could say no to the new one coming. It was Prufrock's nature to not expect too much--and all that can come came through him and he never knew.

I've impressed myself with my ability to make people cry. I thought it was good because they "felt something." It never occurred to me that strong, unusual experience of any kind might not be other people's idea of the best way to live, or might not actually *be* the best way to live. How was I so sure what "strong" was, anyway? Maudlin, out-of-control, terrified, humiliated, discombobulated--what made me so sure these are stronger than peace and gentleness? Was I right that they are the companion piece to intense joy, and without the one you can't have the other? Maybe I've been wrong! And maybe (this is a separate question) I overrated intense joy? There is something calamitous about joy.

Gregory of Nyssa wrote, "Every concept grasped by the mind becomes an obstacle in the quest to those who search." (And I have been so fierce!) So, to have a relationship with the unknowable, we must transcend all that we know, transcend what we've learned in relationships with any other human beings. Open up our hands and let it fly away. Open up our mind and not be so smart. Dante's love of Beatrice mastered him because of the power of his own imagination. How much do we use other



people as projection screens on which to play out our own dreams? It's so easy to love what is absent. I want to know what is present. I want to really know--what? God, the supernatural, nature, spirit, time. I also really want to know human beings. I don't want to use one to get at the other. But that's what I've been doing. Tunneling straight through people's hearts to the afterlife, and mistaking the sea and the rain for human social life. Have I thwarted all my own efforts by trying so hard? Am I very unnatural because I'm never not trying to divine what is natural, and that's just not normal? Am I studying people so intently they end up acting all weird around me? Do they resume their normal lives and interactions only when I leave the room? I challenge people's sense of self, I know (they tell me so)--but what about me? Always challenging, always challenging. I'm so used to challenging myself, I think it might be impossible for me to be truly challenged anymore. I use the Socratic method on myself all day long, and I think I might be entirely anesthetized to it by now. How to calm down, how to calm down? How to let go? I want to be sweet. How to be sweet when you have all fire inside you?

(Just now a radio man said in my ear that Hildegard von Bingen--a nun/philosopher--said, "A fire will consume whatever it cannot transform.")

I don't trust the universe enough to give up my watch for even one night. Do I really think I hold up everything, and if I relax it will all fall down? My perception is the only thing holding the universe together? I had no idea until this very second of the immensity of my ego! I'm my own ghost of when I already lived--did I ever live or am I only the future of my past forever? I move in memory. Shake, shake, shake off all these dreams of reality and super-reality. How to be clean? How to be easy? C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, you know you can.

### Lev Baesh

That's what my rabbi--who has the heartiest laugh and the lovingest presence and the kindest, most knowing and energetic mind--changed his name to on a retreat last month. It just came to him, he said, and who was he to turn away what knocked on his door simply because it looks ridiculous? For Lev Baesh means Heart On Fire. So he's asking us to call him (we who have been comfortably calling him Rabbi Wes all this time), an overweight gay man 36 years old living in Dover, New Hampshire in 1998, "Heart On Fire." I mean, how pretentious! But he doesn't care! It came to him, and he's not about to turn it away. "My heart *is* on fire!" he said. Right out loud he said that, in front of everyone. If he's not embarrassed, then I'm not either. Forget what I said before. I can't just put my own foot on top of my head and squash me all down. I'm *not* so gentle and sweet. My heart *is* on fire. And so is all that I see--trees, lonely girls curving over books on benches, the river moving slow, the cars carrying sweating lovers half-quarreling, the church with its simplistic love message in black plastic letters on a white board new every day, the postal clerks who tease me every day, my son (who said today on our way to the post office, "There are reflections in my man-eye."); my long fingers, the dead bluebird on the sidewalk, the sky which parted for her flight only yesterday, and even the bank with its tellers in pseudo-classy silk and its air conditioning and little pieces of paper and its resigned depositors...even the bank is on fire. Around the corner comes a rusted metal contraption on wheels, and then the hairy-shouldered man pushing

it. Then comes a child much too old for the stroller he's squeezed in, then the fat, hairy woman pushing it. That man knows his wife is no princess, but she is the queen of his life. Even if they can't stand each other (maybe they can, I don't know), even if they're unintelligent, there they are, facing each other, facing their child, naked among these wheeled devices, naked and haloed in the fire of aliveness and aloneness--and the coming breaking, just once, of both those things.

That last sentence might not have the best construction, because as I was typing it there came a continuous mewling from Violet, as if she were stuck, and similar noises from Wolfgang, who has been playing in the room next to my office. Fearing torture, I hurriedly typed the somewhat ambiguous "both those things" and rush out to find my son clapping and hovering over Violet who is hovering over and slapping a mouse, one of its hind legs sticking straight out behind it like a second tail. Violet looks up at me and cries with happiness. I tell Wolfgang to get back, then I pet Violet and call her a good girl. Wolfgang says, "Violet found a mouse to play with!"

"She's not playing, really--she's killing the mouse. That's what cats do--they kill small animals and eat them. It looks disgusting to people, but to her she's doing her work for the house, she's doing what she was born to do. That's why I called her a good girl."

The mouse has taken the opportunity of my speechmaking to drag itself behind the open door into the corner. It takes Violet about half-a-second to find it. I wonder how long that half-a-second felt to that dying mouse? It must have really thought it was getting away, because now for the first time, as Violet very gently picks it up in her mouth, it squeaks. High, piercing squeaks, over and over and over. Wolfgang laughs. "That mouse is funny!"

"It's not funny to the mouse. Something a hundred times bigger than it is scaring and hurting it. C'mon, Wolf, let's go downstairs--this is private between Violet and the mouse. You can look at the mouse again when it's dead, but right now it's private."

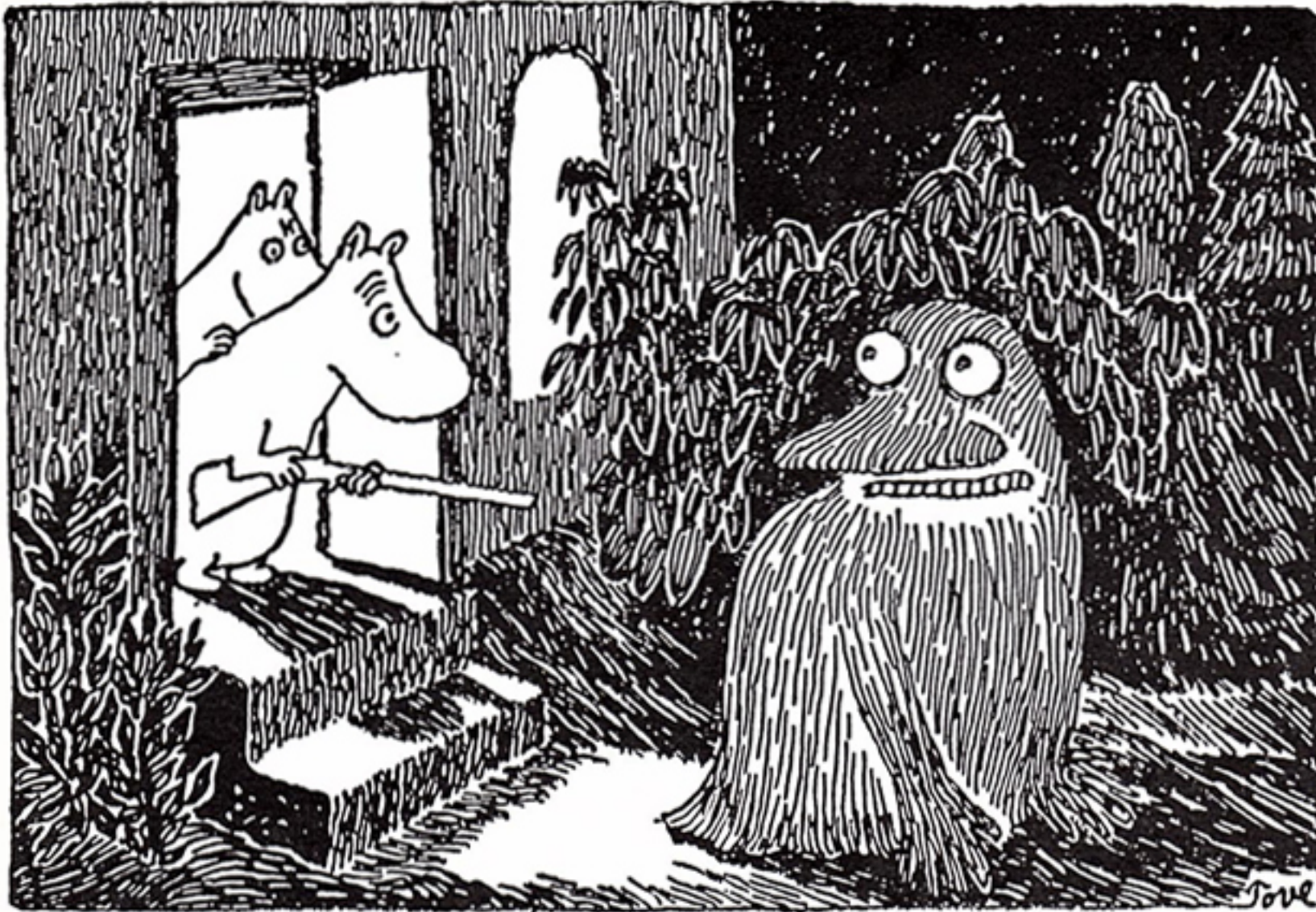
And time just stops, and I see the fire of all of us, as clear as if there were actual flames flying out of our eyes and mouths and hands and hearts. Violet, whose central nervous system was damaged when a car hit her six months ago, who can't even scratch an itch anymore because all the signals are haywire, who scrambles and falls most of the time when she tries to jump up on anything, looking at me as if to say, "See, I'm still useful." Wolfgang, seeing something die for the first time, and feeling the world open up. The mouse, fighting for its life, screaming and hoping even now that it's too late. And me, frozen, my heart racing, ransacking every store of knowledge I've accumulated over the last 29 years to decide at once how to handle this so that both members of my family (I include Violet) are taken care of properly (what should I allow Wolfgang at three to learn about death, pain, terror and innocent cruelty?)--and what do I owe the mouse? Do I intervene? In the pause of all action, even my question is haloed in fire--and then Wolf and I turn and head down the staircase.

This turned out to be one of the rare times when the mouse gets away. So now we have living in this hundred-year-old house one small, bloody mouse with a broken leg, one nerve-damaged cat with metal parts for a pelvis, one kid with long, thick scars all over his chest and side where they opened him up



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to patch up the holes in his heart, and one woman with holes in her thinking, blown through by ghosts of herself till she doesn't even know where she is in Time. And there's the plant my cousins gave me at my mother's funeral, and we haven't talked to each other since--that plant is doing very well. It's a very fine house.

My father comes over (this is the neverending story!) and Wolf and I tell him about the mouse. "Why should she eat mice when she has cat food?" he asks Wolfgang. Maybe he's trying to expand Wolf's thinking, but I know him--he's also trying to destroy my logic in front of my son. My father has holes in his heart too, but no one can fix them. He plays me like he played my mother and my stepmother. I'm not gonna lose, though, like they did. I won't wrangle. I won't fight for my son's respect or love--I demand the first and hope for the second, and nobody better get in my way. I won't get destroyed like I saw happen to the other women in my life, no way. (Some experts on *The Jenny Jones Show* said girls with fathers like mine just about always turn out, like me, promiscuous, bisexual and drug dabblers. They said it's because we fear intimacy, but I'm guessing it's also because we see destruction as normal, inevitable, and would at least like to be in charge of it. We want to take part in our own destruction and have fun, not just lie there and take it.) (My father is very good with Wolfgang--patient and scientific and adventure-some. As he was with me growing up when he wasn't poisoning my relationships with anyone else on earth or disappearing.)

My father asks me to type up a letter for him--he's decided to buy a Russian bride. I'm going to have another new stepmother! This intrigues me. I want to meet a Russian. Then he says that last night he "got with" this woman we both know,

and informs me that she's into scratching till blood comes out, and "likes getting her face screwed into the bathtub drain." This is not the turn I was expecting my essay on the fire in my heart to take. He says he hears some women in Russia can't "get there" unless they're whipped. In my secret life I say, "Anyway. Whatever. Get out of my house." I'm listening very carefully to see if he says anything that Wolfgang could understand or repeat. Apparently he's being just as careful, because he keeps one milli-meter back from crossing the line. I am like a cat at a mousehole, waiting to pounce on one wrong word, and kill. I'm not young enough anymore for him to woo me like he used to--I've morphed into that thing he wages chemical war on (I figure brain power is mostly chemical) all life long, Authority Of Any Kind. I turn my back on him and look at the TV. "You seem decidedly unimpressed," he comments. I say--and my outside life parallels my secret life for once--"Yeah. Whatever. S&M's OK, I guess."

He probably knows somehow that I've been into that stuff off and on, and is trying in his own deformed way to have a conversation with me. How is he supposed to know I'm looking now for some kind of purity that doesn't include talking about getting whipped till you come (though that's exactly where I've looked for purity before)? I never said that to him. I never tell him anything anymore. And just then I see him on fire too--in his seedy, dark, lonely world, reaching out for me with leprous hands, thinking I'm still there with him, and I'm not. We're all trying, we're all on fire. My father is damaged, but he's kind of young and crazy and funny too. Mice eat cheese, cats eat mice, kids eventually get the power and loom up over their parents, lovers turn on each other--we're all killing and getting killed, and when we do what we were born to do, it feels like fire...and I, the ghost, wander in and out of all the murder, with the x-ray eyes God gave me at the expense of other gifts, tunneling through the healthy body to the decay, and then to the young life gathering at the bottom of the pool of rot, getting ready to rise up--I smile at the sun that is burning out, I smile at me thinking I'm so smart and free, I smile at everyone looking so beautiful.

## Love

Napoleon gave up his empire for Josephine not because she was so good in bed or so beautiful or intellectually stimulating--but because he was "used to her." She was older than he, and did not produce a male heir, and all the advisors told him to dump her, and that's when he said he couldn't because he was used to her. And look what happened! He lost everything and was banished to the island of Elba, and Josephine ended up with another lover and a lush garden in the French countryside. I was 17 when I read that, and I didn't understand. Now my friends don't understand why I don't give up the situation I'm in that is clearly not good for me, and I don't understand why they stay in their situations.

He (I can't say my boyfriend because it always changes) said he can't stand it when I pay attention to him, and I got mad, but he's right. Romantic attention is like needles. I'm trying to poke holes through him for me to slip through, to get to God. But it doesn't actually come out fancy-poetic like that in real life. The Eagles come on the radio and I leave it on, because I know it



would annoy him. Even though he's not here, and even though I don't like the Eagles either. My attention is all coiled up and hissing. It has too much energy, it doesn't know where to go. It doesn't fit. It's scared and lonely and aggressive, and it wants so bad to be beautiful. He has needles for me too. In a friendly game of softball, he'll strike me out in a second when anyone else would've let me (the new kid, of dubious abilities) slip by. One time he spent four hours telling me why he couldn't love me. Then he called back because he forgot a few things. The time after that it took five hours. He said he can't stand the way I look at him--always waiting for something he can never give to me. I got even madder then, but he was right again. Still, that I imagine he could give it (not love--which is pretty easy to give--but passage to somewhere else) to me, that's a compliment.

I fooled around with two ladies just 12 hours before he was due in town, and told him, and still he thinks I'm innocent. I mean, an innocent person. Not that he thinks what I did is fine. At least, I think he didn't think it was fine. He has all these theories about everything, I just have to guess. When I told him about my adventures, he said, "Are you going to let yourself be controlled by beauty?", put his cigarette out on the hotel wall, rolled over and said he wouldn't go to breakfast with me, and then got up and we had the most lovely breakfast and then he flirted with one of my best friends. That schizophrenic mathematician was right--rationality does limit a person's concept of his relationship to the cosmos. Something in him lets me see through him into a dream, where none of his actions mean what they mean, and the only important thing is that I stay here where I am travelling through him. "It's not what you say that makes me call you," he said, "it's the sound of the spaces in between." That's what you get used to, what's so hard to let go even in the face of all reasons to let go--how you see this person as being halfway between a friend and a rush of magic, a possibility, a wind...and their vision of you like that too. When he says I'm innocent, I know I am. And even with all the things he does, I see him not only as very innocent, but honorable too. His disconnected ways seem natural to me, they feel wide open. His instability, his carelessness and self-destructiveness feel like coming home.

#### Five And The Nine, I'm Nuts!

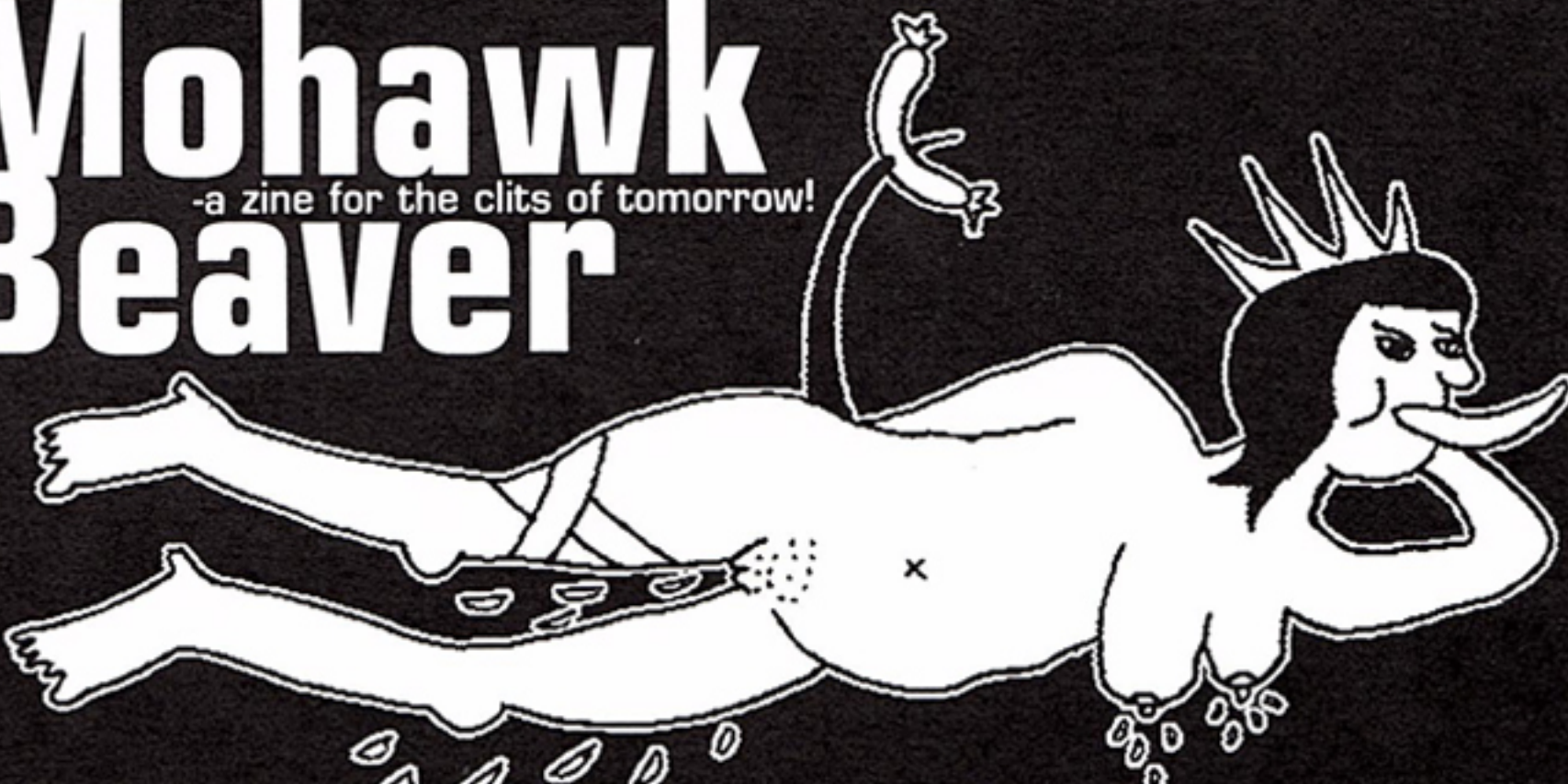
There are five things you have to say to a woman to get her into bed, my father said. One of them was "some form of 'You light up a room.' " My father's wrong. It's not all manipulation, with genes as the only puppeteer. People *do* light up rooms. Just as much as lightbulbs. I don't understand exactly how electricity works, I just see it in action and believe in it. And I see my fellow and I get agitated. I think faster. Him too. He switches records every three-and-a-half minutes, tells jokes, lights a cigarette, changes his mind, starts telling me all this historical data about bridges and dynamite out of the blue. How is turning on a light switch so much more real than that, just because electricians know the numbers and diagrams behind it? I bet there's numbers and diagrams for feeling nervous and excited and light that someone somewhere must be writing down. I used to think love was like headlights skimming a child's room at night--all at an angle and unreal. But that's not so! It's real. He *is* honorable and innocent. My perceptions are not distorted when they're dreamy--they're

illuminated. All at once I saw as clear as I see my hand that the inverse of all I'd been taught is true. I'd been taught how to judge and use what's real and how to distrust all that is not recognizable. I'd been taught people will try to cut in front of you in line, so you better cut in front of them first. And any power you gave up would be used against you. So many guideposts for thinking, they were like trees in a copse so thick I couldn't see and I never knew there was anything beyond it (but I guessed, I guessed!). Now something had knocked me out of there, and I twirled around with emptiness and possibilities in all directions. All those facts were like discolored cellophane and I'd broken through...it's so wide open out here! Oh thank you, thank you, I said out loud.

Something was wrong with Wolfgang, the doctors couldn't tell what. We were on our way to another doctor. This one would figure out that all he needed was to take an antacid once a day, but I didn't know that yet. At that moment, his symptoms were eerily similar to when my mother first had cancer, which finished her off in less than three months. I'd barely slept for three nights and was getting a little hysterical. I'd been thinking, "I can't lose you, Wolf. I know you, I'm used to having you around. I need to hear more of what you have to say. I can lose anything else, just don't let me lose you." And then I realized I will lose him, one way or another. I'll die first or he'll die first. At some point or other I'll lose everything. No matter how tight or complexly I hang on, no matter how deserving I make myself--I'm going to lose. I could drive off the road into a tree right now, scared and exhausted as I am. This *is* the afterlife. Right here. This drive, this day, this trouble, this doctor's visit, this rolling sky. This is heaven on earth. This is that thing all religions talk about that I tried so hard to understand and never could. I knew it all along! I've struggled with peace, it made me angry--I was sure it was wrong. I'd get irritated even at my beloved rabbi when he'd start talking about working towards the perfection of mankind. Because imperfections are what's interesting, conflict is what makes things happen, and I just have no use for calm. But peace doesn't disturb the conflict! It's there, all along, flowing underneath. Under this agitation and sniping and confusion and pain and constant changes flows a very sweet

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peace. I started shaking all over and I was afraid I'd have a heart attack because I understood that man is perfected *now*. I didn't figure it out with a string of reason that could come unraveled. I hadn't built a web of logic that someone could yank a filament from, and make the whole thing collapse. It came to me--it



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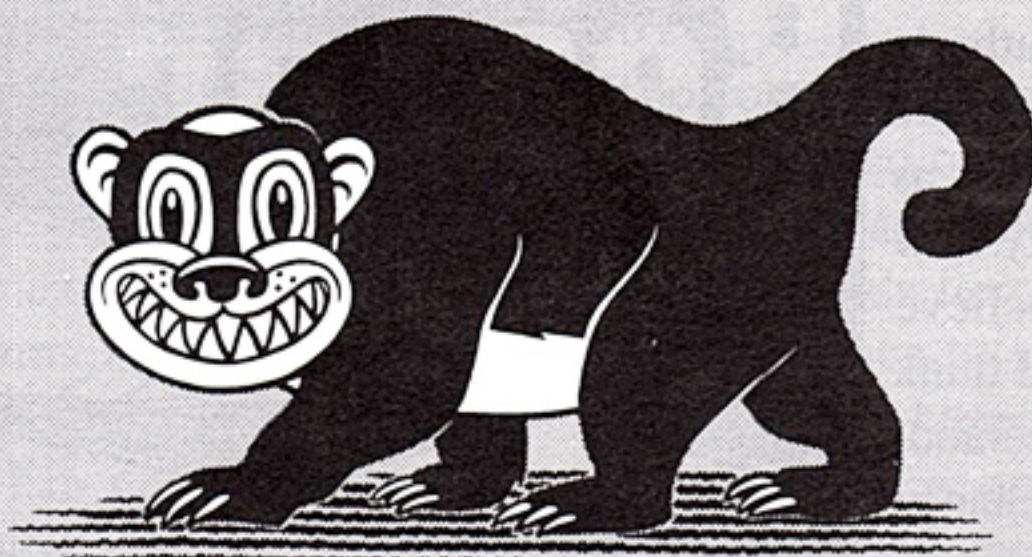
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destroy it. Knowing came in waves over and over and over through my body and face, and in the sky--undulating forever. My skin was not a boundary between my insides and the sky. It felt like snake venom spreading through my veins, out my fingertips, looping around the globe and back again--not what I figured out, but what has always known itself, come to me at last. Welcome, welcome, I've been waiting! I've been waiting so hard. You could torture me now, you could use every Machiavellian trick on me in a row, and I could not forget that this is true. This is the first thing I've ever understood. I got out to get gas and candy, and there was a pregnant woman smoking. Is she perfect? Yes, yes, yes. She's doing wrong, but the mother's love is there. She's just dirtied on the top. It's the same pure goodness underneath--it just doesn't know itself. There is no slightly good goodness. It's all pure and perfect, waiting to be released. The perfection of mankind is realized when that goodness knows itself. If a shady-looking character approaches you in an alley, of course you should try to get away from him--but you're getting away from him for his own goodness as well as yours. Because for him to hurt you would be a sin on him, would not be what his soul wants. People get confused, that's where cruelty comes from. I started driving again and looked at all the trees and clouds and the other cars flying by to see if they looked on fire. No. This was more like water. And every song that came on the radio, no matter how insipid it had seemed to me before, now seemed full of wisdom. In a Stevie Wonder song, the cymbals were crashing, crashing--I wonder how I never noticed that before? They had gone wild! And that song "Do You Love Me Now That I Can Dance"--that's how those two communicate--action, movement. They pour life into dances--so much is said with how they arrange and unarrange their limbs. I was so happy that they found each other, and I'm sure that she does love him now that he can dance.



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# Letters

As an editor, I never really mess around with the content of people's work--I see my job as trying to help them say what they want to say better. But my father was an alcoholic and I've met a lot of writers for whom alcohol is a lifestyle. I'm very fond of you. There's a part of me that feels protective towards you. There's another part of me that doesn't want to influence you at all but to just to see where you go. But the alcohol thing concerns me. I've never seen you drunk, but I know a couple of things. The cycle is usually that there's something you don't want to feel--you want to feel fun and light and free again, which you associate with alcohol. But the problem is that it gets harder and harder to get there. See if you have any of these images from your own life: In her teens when she was drunk she had a beautiful, toned body and she was happy and free. She was fun and joyful. When she was in her 20s, she had more emotional weight to her and her behavior while she was drinking was more powerful in some ways, more important. It meant more. She still looked good and her body was a powerful tool. In her 30s, she began getting tired, bags under her eyes, her flesh was softer. There was something pathetic and out-of-tune with her when she was drinking. Something ugly, something angry, something mean. Dark. In her 40s there was a resignation in it. She admitted she was an alcoholic and didn't care. She was no longer pretty, no longer slender--she was puffy, shabby. Then she was fat and bloated and gross--you avoided her. It made you nervous to be around her. She was grandiose, she made very little sense, people laughed at her to her face and she swallowed this, too. I'm not saying this is your future, Lisa, but watch out, okay? You have a lot going for you and you're not obsessed with alcohol yet. Just watch it, okay? Your writing is good. You aren't phony. You are a great net of energy. So, great. I love you. Take care.

--Randy Roark, Boulder CO

Let me just start by saying that I am boring and normal, and this has been proven by shrinks. On the other hand, my family has always been paranoid about me, since mental illness has already run through two generations of women in my family. I think the trick is that they lost it after childbirth and as I have a special blood type that creates antibodies against any fetus in my womb, I guess my body and I agree that motherhood is not for me. Instead I work as a nurse and get to lavish my maternal instincts on feeble 100-year-old ladies. My grandmother, when she was still a young mother, was hit by a huge black DeSoto that lunged through the plate glass windows of the local supermarket where she was innocently pushing her cart down the aisle and landed on top of her breaking nearly every bone in her body. She spent the rest of her life locked up. My aunt gave birth to a retarded baby named Hal. She lived in Utah, and the Mormons harassed and blamed her for the way Hal was. She had a psychotic episode and tried to kill herself and take Hal with her. She survived and was locked up for a while. My mother came out to help and promptly *she* had a nervous breakdown. So when I started to get temperamental at puberty, it sent my father and his parents into a state of paranoia where they hid all the knives and scissors in the house and dragged me to different shrinks. One a man who held me forcibly on his lap and claimed there must be something wrong with me the way I violently rejected affection, one a crosseyed old woman missing the tip of her pinky finger whose

style was to threaten me and say that I was breaking the law and if I didn't start talking soon I was gonna be in big trouble. I sat there with my fingers in my ears going blah, blah, blah!

I started to get my periods, which were terrible. My mother taught me to lay upside down on a slanted ironing board to relieve the pain. I think she also got bored with motherhood because she would disappear for days on end. She left my father and went from housewife to nudist, screwing men in an open room and walking around nude afterward in front of me. Needless to say, hippies have the most disgusting bodies on the face of the earth! Because of these revolting people, my sexuality is puritanical...I think people should keep their clothes on, try to wear as much as possible--especially in bed!

I had a vivid and highly suggestible imagination, and too much time alone sent me into tail spins. Alone for a week with my newly acquired period reading *The Exorcist* on the slanted ironing board, blood running down my leg, staining my nightgown, I became Megan. I could walk upside down, spew vomit and terrorize adults! I have to admit I did get a little crazy tip-toeing down the long narrow halls, imagining that if I got a running start and held my breath I could levitate, floating all the way to the end and shooting down the stairs. I still remember it feeling so real that to this day it is hard to believe I didn't really do it! So when my mother came home and found a half-crazy, half-starved, awful-smelling 12-year-old girl--she decided to take me to the beauty parlor. They gave me an ugly shag, which I cried about all the way home. My mother couldn't stand listening to me, so she got on her bicycle and rode away. Miffed, I absentmindedly knocked something off the table and broke it. Before I knew it, I had smashed up everything in the house. Excited, I ran to the bathroom and chopped off the hated hairdo, leaving me looking like a concentration camp victim and definitely a far cry from Farrah. My mother came home, took one look at me, left and came back with her transactional analysis counselor and a creepy hippy couple. They each grabbed an arm and a leg and carried me out into a station wagon. The night in the mental ward consisted of being harassed by the nurse to admit that I smoked pot! In the morning, a doctor interviewed me, and when my father came to rescue me, he told him that I wasn't crazy, but I soon would be if he left me there. Luckily my father took me home and I didn't see my mother again for six years. I used to have nightmares about her; that she was coming to get me and that I had an Apollo space suit on with lead boots and couldn't run away. My mother now weighs 300 pounds, we love each other's company, going out together pawing through junk, eating in dives, and whipping each other into a frenzy about art, trash and ideas! Though I still get superstitious about the length of my hair being connected to the degree of my sanity, I'm normal now and I want you to know that I'm happy--just had a wedding to a tall, blue-eyed Sagittarius. --[name and address withheld due to husband's position in society]

I am a 28-year-old queer punk pervert who would like to send you gifts. Your review of *Gummo* struck a chord of recognition in me: I whipped a frail strange man I met in a gay cruise park yesterday. He told me he had m.s. He said physical abuse is his strength, his connection to life. At home I learned that a friend had died (overdose). Life is a math puzzle and sometimes + = - .

--Pussyboy Dave, no address



# How Would You Want To Die?

We were driving to the beach and David (The Elevator Drops) was talking about this stripper who wants to die by sticking her head in a lion's yawning mouth and letting it maul her. He said he wanted to die lying in bed listening to the very soothing voice of the BBC count down to nuclear destruction, because that way he wouldn't miss anything. Everyone would die at once, and his friends wouldn't have this great barbecue and say, "This is fun! Too bad David isn't here...because he's *dead*!" Then we agreed that everything has always been here and always will be. But we can't move ourselves around in the loop of eternity of our own volition, or we think we can't. Death is just one place on the loop. Eternity right now is one of those things you either know or else you know the opposite, like you either smoke or don't smoke, and there's nothing you can say to change it or explain it. So you might as well not talk about it. But we do. Something I've noticed is when you have a lot of imagination you tend to think the opposite of what you're thinking. We were flying down the highway wearing blue plastic sunglasses, talking about death and feeling so happy and sleepy and ten years old in the bright sunshine.

How would you want to die?

AMY KELLNER: Leisurely heroin overdose. Cremation. Scatter the ashes southward off the Empire State Building. As you can see, I've thought about this before.

CHRIS HALL: I'd like to die from loneliness.

LISA: What does your answer reveal about you?

CHRIS: The answer reveals that I'm a way too sensitive Pisces, a fatalist who needs constant attention and stimulus to find meaning, joy and value in life. My vision of a death by loneliness goes something like this: Gradually I will cease to mean anything to anyone, either by constant bridge-burning or sheer attrition; not a phone call nor a letter will I receive, even my family will grow weary of my self-absorbed and underexamined life. I'll lose my job due to absenteeism, and the government won't come by to collect delinquent taxes. I think the term is ennui. Just a wasting away, while the world bustles on oblivious and unperturbed. My heart will simply stop.

MATT JASPER: My answer is so predictable that it's probably taken already, but...*sporagmus*!

LISA: What's that?

MATT: Maenads--female followers of Dionysis--would catch a boy who's almost a man, drink a lot, and then have a wild orgy with him...basically, kill him. Rip him to pieces.

LISA: Did this really happen?

MATT: Yes. It's documented. In B.C. times. I thought for sure everyone would be giving that for an answer! But maybe it's a mythological Hobbit dork fantasy, I don't know.

LISA: Are you a mythological Hobbit dork?

MATT: No. You are.

LISA: Ho!

MATT: So I was wondering if some of your friends could get together and arrange that for me....

STEVE HESSKE: In your arms.

LISA: What does your answer reveal about you?

STEVE: That I'm a pathetic loser willing to die in the arms of someone who has no idea of who I really am (i.e., doesn't know my first name, forgets that she talked to me on the phone several times).

LUCAS ABEL: Starvation might be fun. Well at least the last couple of days would be.

LISA: What does your answer say about you?

LUCAS: What do you think having a survey on people's preferred death says about you?

SONKE LORENZEN: After midnight with my bodyparts immersed in a starlike pattern in the Zurich lake while fireworks sprinkle unto the surface of the water.

WOLFGANG CARVER: I want to pick the thunder up and eat it!

GREGORY MOSS: There are probably a *million* ways I'd like to die, but my favorite is this: I drink, either willingly or unwittingly, a newly invented toxin which painlessly liquefies all my internal organs, making hot, wet thick sauce out of 'em. I lie in bed in a kind of pre-dead aroused state, in some nice pajamas, you know?

And as I'm sort slipping in and out of this eroticized half-waking dream I literally piss my life away--pissing out a hot red mass of visceral goo like an immense tidal wave of an orgasm in *slllllooooowww* motion. And then they find me dead, a powdery white husk with this red hot goop that was my life-pudding in a puddle that smells like a jungle between my legs on the bed. Victory!

LISA: Wowie! What does your answer reveal about you?

GREG: I think it means that my understanding of death is basically erotic--which is kind of a cliché. But I mean that piss-death is an old hot fantasy for me so I guess it's true. Mostly what I think it means is that I think literally about death: I want to see my insides come pouring out so we can look at the living part and the dead part all under the same light. Like, I want to see a visually undeniable external sign of life leaving my body. Plus I want my death to be *very messy*. I want to get my life-stuff *all over everything*.

LISA: Why did you say "victory"?

GREG: Death just seems like a kind of victory. A messy death especially feels both like revenge and transcendence. Like: "Here's my messy death! Clean it up and cry for me!"

In any case, I'm optimistic about dying. I think it's like a surprise, like a present. I'm not eager to die, but I'm not afraid of it. Not yet anyway. Man, these are hard questions.

DERRY CLUNT: With my fingers around a white man's neck.

LISA: What does your answer reveal about you?

DERRY: Violence "relaxes" me.

STELLA: Speeding down the wet city streets, my glossy swollen lips mirroring the blurred reflections of the early morning neon on my windshield, I crank up the Styx on my stereo. I light a cigarette and smile to myself with slight inebriation and sex. The long narrow streets are empty and I speed up, propelled by the impending climax of "Tom Sawyer." I realize that it's just not going to get any better than this. I go faster and faster, until the music fills the car with a scream. My car slightly leaves the ground as I hit the sidewalk, aiming straight into the middle of the







plateglass window. I crash through and the glass shatters into a million sharp shards that burn through me and tear me into a million pieces that break up into the infinitesimal whole of matter into energy as I go down, up, and out in a blaze of glory.

BRAD HONEYMAN: I'll skip the obvious (of a heart attack, underneath someone--not unlike yourself--of mythical sexual prowess).

LISA: All you do is reject me over and over, even in death.

BRAD: Someone said, "Rejection can be understood as a wise person's ability to avoid temptation that would otherwise serve as his or her tragic demise."

LISA: Who?

BRAD: Some guy only I know.

LISA: That guy doesn't know how to have a good time!

THURSTON MOORE: Slow opium fadeout with poet-slut (name withheld).

ZEEK SHECK: I like a lot of ways. Crashing my car into a wall would be my suicide of choice but then if ever I get in my car, I always think, "Aw fuck suicide, how about if I drive down to Vegas and hang out in the casinos?" I have a noose and I put that around my neck every once in a while. My roommate caught me once, wearing it while I was using my computer. She said, "Is that a noose?" (It was strung up to the ceiling.) I felt kind of embarrassed and silly to be caught. I sort of like how it feels. I played Eeney Meanie Miney Moe to see if I would jump off the Hoover, the Twin Towers, a cliff in Upper State New York or Yosemite. I lost to Yosemite but I reneged and wandered off to have fun instead. Of course it would be very romantic to be murdered by some big hulk of a man bodybuilder and his fat-ass friend, strangled and then stuffed in the closet to be saved for later. It would be fun to explode for no reason, while walking down the street, in the dark of the night. I suspect I will never die completely. I will probably be cryogenically frozen in a glass coffin deep underground, in a room with soft wet walls. I will be unfrozen from time to time to be used as the sex slave of my political enemies. You might think this is fetishistic but *you never know what the future might hold!*

LISA: What does your answer reveal about you?

ZEEK: Explain myself? Life is an arduous struggle a good 30% of the time, what with the parking tickets and pointless jobs and botched love affairs. I try to make fun of everything as much as possible to take the edge off. But sometimes if I feel like bathing in self pity, I'm allowed, or if I have a particularly sick fantasy, I'm not about to feel guilty for it. As for wanting to be necrophiled, I would like a real *man* in total control of the sex situation. Because I am really shy sexually. The problem is that men are afraid of me, because of my murderously evil stage presence. Wimps and submissives are drawn to me, expecting me to carry the conversation and show them the way. But I don't really like conservatives or the fearful so much because I am a chameleon. Fear is catchy. The more fun and happy a friend is, the more fun and happy I am and vice versa (unless I have low blood sugar). A necrophile will just take what he wants and not be worried while I lay there dead enjoying the passivity. If I'm dead I would not be thinking, "Holy Cow a hot man is touching me what do I do?" I would just lie there (I wouldn't be able to run away in fear either.). And another thing: I'm on the go, 20 million endeavors to not be bored or lonely--projects, shows, etc. A lot of times, because nothing is going on, I end up starting a big elaborate project and being a control freak. I tell people what to do, especially if they can't make up their minds. So I need the good balance of someone telling me what to do, making the decisions and being demanding. Plus long-term celibacy is making me more and more perverted. Wanting to be necrophiled is the natural result.

DARBY ROMEO: I used to see my death in everything. Every move exposed an option that led to it. For years I was so haunted I could hardly function, and people who locked themselves up in their homes made sense to me. Shards of glass would pour off office buildings in imaginary earthquakes. Cars would crash at every turn. Sharks would snap, and gravity would pull me off any tall location. I could feel the flesh burning, the bones breaking, the organs bursting. I could picture being confined in a straitjacket--but how could they stop these thoughts of

doom!

BOB: Someone told me that when your blood pressure drops it makes your heart beat faster with anxiety and it's like here we go.... Like a rollercoaster, and I'm not fond of rollercoasters.

RACHEL JOHNSON: When I was in that terrible car accident, my life flashed before my eyes, and all it was was a bunch of unfinished business. That was a horrible way to die. It's really important to me now to be peaceful. At that split second, I want to just go into it. That doesn't mean I don't have a will to live--I'll fight till the end--but at the last moment, I just want to gather everything of me and just go. I want to give over to it, not be taken over by it. I picture myself dying violently, but I'd like to die in my sweetie's arms.

LISA: I always see myself dying alone. It's between me and death. I don't want everyone looking at our private consummation of our relationship. I've seen all these people all my life--now I'm meeting someone new (death), and you know how when you first meet someone you just want to be alone with them all the time?

RACHEL: I want love to get me through the transition. That's how I love to go to sleep--with people all around and the radio on. I want my loved one and my siblings there as I die.

LISA: Hey, what about me?

RACHEL: Well, you said you want to be alone for yours! You can look in the window.

ROB PASH: You destroy me.

SKOTT WADE: You would be on your deathbed, and I would be at your side, just waiting, asking questions you never answer, waiting.... You'd have the little sheets pulled up to your chin as you take your last breath, and I'd smirk, knowing that you had just taken the answers to every question on earth with you. Then, I too would expire, in a little fetal ball, under the window across the room. Something like that.

LISA: Hm. I wonder what the symbolism of dying under the window is?

SKOTT: My mom was so poor that we couldn't afford a fan, so during the summer I'd sleep on the floor, so that the linoleum would keep me cool. Then again, maybe I

*illustration previous page: "It might be nice to drown." by Dame Darcy*



just like the contrast of the light coming in through the window, and my empty shell of a corpse tucked under the rays.

LISA: That's lovely. Here's my other question: Why is it men want to die with me? Do I have some horrible force? I don't know what to think about this!

SKOTT: I don't even know you; I just think it would be neat to die near you--if dying were to be neat at all. I love the way I feel when I read what you write... it's like you're talking to me. Human interaction and reaction are so weird. You do have some great force--and as I learned watching the superfriends, with great power comes great responsibilities. I hope you learn something from that.

GARY HELD: I would like to die on the highest spot in San Francisco as the 1,000-foot wave crashes over the city (already toppled by earthquakes).

STEVE POWER: You are beautiful and restless like a tiger or a lion--if I bat an eye, one sweep of your claw would kill me. You are feisty. Don't worry! I will not bat an eye!

BRETT GURRETT: Probably post-coital. Instead of rolling over and going to sleep, roll over and die. Definitely not appropriate on a first date....

JESSICA HUNDLEY: On my back in cool grass under warm night, held by the person I love the most in the world, knowing that I had done everything in my life that I had ever wanted to do and done it well. Kissing him slow into languid sleep and dreaming, remembering each moment of intensity or beauty I had ever had and of every person I had ever loved, right down to the boy whose name I can't remember, who loved RUSH and had black hair and dandruff, who I kissed in the wooden bleachers in the dark, "Stairway to Heaven" reaching its climax, shaking the backboard and everyone's sneakers squeaking on the wax floor as they swayed with that overwhelming adolescent dry hump lust. I'd remember how the boy had moved all the way from Canada smelling of Dial soap and flannel and sweat and his tongue like a fish in my mouth. Then the dream fades slow and there is a sweet bright beautiful explosion of color and light and finally a gorgeous and open and comforting Nothing.

KEN CARVER: In a great deal of pain, slowly. Because I want to live as long as I can, and as soon as they start drugging you for the pain, your stomach shuts down.

LISA: What does your answer reveal about you?

KEN: That I want to live.

LISA: Why do you cling to it so fiercely?

KEN: The time before you're born and the time after you're dead goes on and on. Why would I want to lose even one day of this time I have being alive?

DONNA KLEMM: How do I know I'm not already dead when I sleep without electricity?

LISA: Is that a line from a song?

DONNA: Dear Lisa, the statement is from me. I'm thinking often about not-being. It's part of my lucky living.

[bar interviews of death in Columbus, Ohio]

JERRY WICK: How would I want to die? Give me one of those--that's how I want to die. Ha!

LISA: Gonna drink yourself to death?

JERRY: Yeah, pretty much.

BRET LEWIS: Yeah, it's poetic.

LISA: You really think that's poetic?

JERRY: It's better than dying in a rainforest of malaria.

LISA: It's the same exact thing.

JERRY: It's really not.

LISA: Yeah it is. Every time it recurs--malaria or a bender--it's stronger, and as it digs deeper into your cells, the fantasies get stranger.

JERRY: Yeah but you have a lot of fun

# Jenny Mae

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drinking.

LISA: You have a lot of fun having malaria.

JERRY: I don't think you do have fun having malaria. But then again, you're the person who likes to have the spins.

LISA: It's the rollercoaster ride you don't have to wait in line for!

JERRY: Oh, and you also like your menstrual cramps. Makes you feel like a woman. So malaria might be fun for you. I would hate it.

BRET: I want to die from pinkeye. I would hate to drown.

LISA: What's so bad about drowning?

BRET: It takes so long. Very claustrophobic.

JERRY: And you could lose your mind just before you die.

LISA: Jeff, how would you want to die?

JEFF GRAHAM: Jeez, that's a rough question.

LISA: You're a rough man, Jeff.

JERRY: How do you want to die, Lisa?

LISA: Slowly. I wanna feel it coming.

JERRY: Oh, gross!

LISA: Well I'm only gonna die once, so I might as well get the whole thing.

ERIC: But you're only gonna remember it for two seconds!

LISA: Ah, the question: Is experience not real until gone over in memory?

JEFF: I would probably want to die in an extreme rush--like driving off a cliff at 150 miles per hour in an exotic sports car, something with a lot of intensity and g-force. And then bam! it's over! And take a whole bunch of cocaine just prior to it. That, and the sweetest piece of pussy on my face and I'm getting off right at the same time.

LISA: How do *you* want to die?

A BOSS AT THE STUDIO WHERE WE RECORDED MY NEW CD: Natural causes.

LISA: Bad answer!

BOSS: Turn that thing off!

LISA: No!

BOSS: I don't know how I want to *die*!

LISA: Aw, man, you *suck*! I gotta *go*!

DAVE: I'm just going to answer on a whim. Quickly. But painlessly. No, that's too romantic. Old age.

LISA: Take 60 seconds to really think about it, then tell me.

DAVE: [*long pause*] OK, I got it. Slowly. But painlessly.

LISA: You took *that* long to come up with *that*?

DAVE: Yeah. I guess I'm a pussy.

LISA: How about you die on a football field?

DAVE: Yeah, I wanna be going up for a pass and the free safety hits me from below and I spin around four times before I hit the ground.

LISA: What's your name?

DAVE: Dave.

LISA: There's a million Dave's in my life. What's your last name?

DAVE: Can I make one up? Freeman.

LISA: Are you a free man?

DAVE: I like to pretend that I am, and that's the key to freedom.

JERRY: Lisa!

LISA: Yes, dear?

JERRY: This drink is for you.

LISA: Thank you. So, Dave, you say you want a ball to hit you in the head? You wanna get asphyxiated by pompom in a hideous accident?

DAVE: No, I caught the ball, but then I spun around six times and hit the turf, and I don't move. No one knows what happened, how I actually expired.

LISA: How would you want to die?

GIRL: Quietly.

LISA: You want someone to smother you with a pillow? That's quiet.

GIRL: No, more quickly. A gun shot. But not too violent.

LISA: Like you're at your friend's house and he's cleaning out his gun and it goes off by accident and hits you in the brain?

GIRL: Yeah.

LISA: What are you doing hanging out with these gun fanatics? And smotherers? You're crazy.

GIRL: Ha! How do you want to die?

LISA: Maybe cancer.

GIRL: You want all the phases of death.

LISA: Yeah! My mother died of cancer. She metamorphasized into this other person, a dream person. It's mostly a nightmare, but there's dreams too, like melodies. I'd like to do that. Have brain cancer.

GIRL: You think so? I wouldn't.

LISA: Yeah, but if you got shot, you'd never know it. It would be like all you ever did with your life was live, you never died.

HAFID BOULABIZ: That's tough question. Always wants to die in the sea.

LISA: Doesn't that scare you, an air-breathing organism, to be out of control under the water?

HAFID: No, actually I feel home.

LISA: Really? You'd like to drown?

HAFID: No. Just die in the sea. In a plane

### Personal

Lezzie misfit, 23, Gemini, short and fat, really cute, giggles a lot but actually quite smart. Likes Prince and Harry Pussy, unicorns and fisting, drugs and sewing, my cat and my shrink, and embarrassing myself in print. Dislikes Modern Primitivism, sandals, and people who don't let me smoke in their home, even by the window. Looking for a tough lady music-maker to teach me to play drums or guitar (I can already play "Amazing Grace" and "I Wanna Be Your Dog") and watch public-access porno and make fun of granola dykes with mullet hair-do's. Really, I'm comparatively not-crazy. Thanks, Amy K. 112 W. 15th St. #3 NYC 10011.

*Personals are \$5 for 50 words. Box 474,  
Dover NH 03821.*

crash, then enjoy the last few seconds, floating. Look up, look at the waves, and say goodbye to the thing I love the most: the sea.

LISA: Very nice. And how would you like to die?

HAFID'S FRIEND: Quickly.

LISA: One's imagination controls one's life. I've found in doing these interviews that how one describes one's death is how one actually lives. What do your answers reveal about you?

HAFID: I wouldn't know--except that I like freedom. I don't like people ordering me around. I like to do things. I know what's right, what's wrong. I like to do the right thing and I like people not to affect my nature.

LISA: And in the ocean you're unencumbered? There's only sky and sea as far as you can see?

HAFID: Friendly waves. No matter how high they go or down they go, they're always friendly to me. I'm always safe.

LISA: That's very nice!

FRIEND: What does my answer reveal?

LISA: "Quickly"? That's very escapist. It's irresponsible. You don't even want to deal with death--do you want to deal with life?

FRIEND: It's not a question of dealing with life. It's about riding the waves. I believe in destiny. It just takes me along. I don't want to think about it. I take each day as it comes.

HAFID: Death is just an extension of life, the part where you become a part of something you don't know.

LISA: What culture did you grow up with?

HAFID: Mixed. Arab, essentially. I'm



open to all cultures. I've lived all over, but I've been unhappy with all those cultures. So I'm still searching for the...the real thing, you know? I'm still searching for something.

LISA: What brought you here, to Ohio?

HAFID: Nothing. Just luck of the draw. A friend of mine in Cincinnati said, "Well, if you want to specialize in international trade, this school is as good as anywhere else."

LISA: Do you practice a religion?

HAFID: I think all the religions are quite restrictive. They want to force you to adhere to every stupid edict. I don't like that!

LISA: I don't think that's true.

FRIEND: Not the religion itself, but the people who practice it, reinforce restrictive rules.

LISA: You're just looking at the bad side. Any mystic segment of any religion is not restrictive.

HAFID: Yes. I give you that. I was speaking of mainstream religions. Judaism, Islam, Christianity--each one of them think they have the answer to everything. I tell you what: they have the answers to some things, but not the whole thing. I practiced Islam, I was happy--somewhat. But the main answers were not provided. Being a heathen is the answer. Being yourself.

LISA: That's a very ancient religion.

HAFID: Yes, like the Celts. I admire the Celts, because they make up their own. They mix magic with all kinds of things.

LISA: I believe in magic. I believe everything is on fire with the history of everything that has ever been felt.

HAFID: Let me ask you a question: Do you believe we just live for the moment and it's over, or do you believe in reincarnation?

LISA: Neither one. I believe in the eternal moment--it's what's happening, always has been and will be, waves of being, and we're only the vessels.

HAFID: Is your existence limited to the span of your life and death?

LISA: The real life is not us; we become the real life when it flows through us. I don't feel limited. Do you?

HAFID: I'm asking you.

LISA: No, I think everything that could ever happen will happen to me.

HAFID: What about life after death?

LISA: I don't believe in death. When I die, when my particular consciousness dies, someone else will have everything I've had, everything that has flowed

through me, and it's OK. It's the same thing as me living.

HAFID: That's reincarnation.

LISA: But I don't believe I'll be reborn. I believe what I think of as me never was the real thing. And I don't believe there are levels of existence to ascend or descend to with each life. I believe we all have it all. I don't care about me so much. Well, of course I do, because I'm me, but....

FRIEND: But your so-called soul....

LISA: It's not mine. I believe my soul was here a long time before "me" was, and will still be here when I'm gone.

HAFID: I am struggling with that right now. I feel like I have lived so many places that I've never been to yet. In some cases, I could tell people about streets, how they look and all that--that I've never been on.

LISA: Do you believe in genetic memory?

HAFID: Not really. You know why? There's nothing pure about genetics. I'm from North Africa. I have Arab blood, European blood, maybe native African. So who am I, exactly? Am I all those people? Where I come from, we have existed long before Christ, long before [?]. Who am I? I don't know.

LISA: Have you studied chaos theory?

HAFID: Kind of. I have two puzzling questions. I had no choice over my existence. I did not want to exist, I did not want to be brought to life. I was the 13th child, my mother was 50 years old when I was born. I was not planned, I was not supposed to exist. It was forced upon me.

LISA: It's not *that* forced. As soon as you were old enough to realize you had existence, you were old enough to say no thanks and kill yourself.

HAFID: No, but I didn't want to kill myself. Why should I kill myself? Why don't I kill the people who brought harm to me, who imposed existence on me when I did not want it?

LISA: It's no harm to be alive! It's a gift, it's a joy! Look at you! Look at you! You're bathed in this beautiful yellow light, you have your friend here with you, and you have me who serendipitously just came to you in the night!

HAFID: Look at it this way--

LISA: Look, you came from all these different countries and you're here tonight in this yellow light and it's perfect! Don't tell me it's not perfect!

After that, we went out and did karaoke. This guy Dave (not football death Dave, or

nuclear war death Dave--a new one) has this style of dance that is just really forceful, I mean truly amazing. I mean, you can't exactly write about it--you gotta imitate it. The karaoke master was getting all mad about it. He thought he was truly the master. But it's karaoke! It's silly! He thought he was so-o-o suave. He thought it was so his business. Dave and I were putting down different names on our request-to-sing slips of paper so we could have more than our share of turns, and the master wouldn't let us. We ran in the bathroom and traded shirts, thinking he wouldn't recognize us that way. Still he turned us down. I think something that ridiculous deserves success. Like in *Grease* when the three mooners traded jackets, and they thought somehow they were fooling someone. Dave is twice as big as me, and my shirt was really tiny and tight on me, so you can imagine what it looked like on him. Gene Mullett slips into a Mexican accent when he sings. Not consciously--it just happens. So we got to hear the Tejano version of "Dream Police." Haunting. I did Andy Gibb's "I Wanna Be Your Everything," and gave a soliloquy at the beginning on how deadly love is, and how Victoria Principal killed Andy Gibb with love, and who will be the one to kill you? Is it the one sitting next to you right now? I think everyone should give soliloquies at karaoke. I also did interpretive dance and for some reason was lifting chairs over my head to signify approval every time I thought someone was giving a particularly fine performance--which was just about every song. I have an entirely different set of logic when drunk. I also speak French much better. Jerry remarked privately that he realized Dave is my soulmate, because we're funny and crazy in the same way, and we both do cartwheels and stuff all the time. I said, automatically, "No, you're my soulmate." To be polite. But in fact I never thought that. Jerry's mouth is loud, but his soul is deep, and bright with pain (sorry to be so dramatic, but souls can be that way), and mine isn't. (I'm saying this all wrong--he's actually a cheery guy...the way someone running very fast has a maniacal, humorous kind of cheer sort of rising off their skin. You know?) Anyway, my soul is wide but not deep. Jerry was helping me record my new CD and I asked him to play something sad and pretty on piano. He was still drunk from the night before, could barely stand up, and what he played was so beautiful I started crying! And I've cried every time I've listened to it since. Things don't have to have a physical body in order to be injured. The song is something gentle and hurtful, like a doe--each off-kilter note is a mark on its smooth, tawny fur



where it got hit. Anyway, back at karaoke, I suddenly got a yearning for a milk bath, so Jerry escorted me back to his house, ran my bath and poured the milk and then left again, because he stays out all night. I wrote him a note and it was very magnanimous! When I saw it the next day, I was glad to learn that I can be so nice. I'm glad it didn't say, "Why must you stay out all night?" but read instead: "To Jerry Wick, after my milk bath and before my spins, in his sliding Wisconsin pen with the mouse chasing the cheese past the barn: I thank you for cleaning the tub and putting on my beautiful B.O.C. album. And for enjoying your crab (lobster?) so much today. You're a good friend in my life. I wish you the best and think of you as I fall asleep, so milky, and the music so loud in my sweet ear. P.S. You're cute."

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